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*EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER!*

**NEWS ITEM, 1944**

Cigarette shortage spreads  
...Counters jammed...  
Millions try different brands  
—any brand they can get.



## EXPERIENCE TAUGHT MILLIONS

the Differences in  
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...and now the demand for Camels  
—always great  
—is greater than ever in history.

DURING the war shortage of cigarettes  
... that's when your "T-Zone" was  
really working overtime.

That's when millions of people found that  
their "T-Zone" gave a happy okay to the  
rich, full flavor and the cool mildness of  
Camel's superb blend of choice tobaccos.

And today more people are asking for  
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matter how great the demand:

*We do not tamper with Camel quality. We  
use only choice tobaccos, properly aged, and  
blended in the time-honored Camel way!*

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Nationwide survey:*

**MORE DOCTORS  
SMOKE **CAMELS****  
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Doctors too smoke for pleasure.  
And when three independent  
research organizations asked  
113,597 doctors—What cigarette  
do you smoke, Doctor?—the  
brand named most was Camel!

Your 'T-ZONE'  
will tell you...  
**T FOR TASTE...**  
**T FOR THROAT...**  
That's your proving ground  
for any cigarette. See  
if Camels don't  
suit your 'T-ZONE'  
to a 'T'!



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## Editor's Note:

CORADDI, student magazine of The Woman's College, contains in this issue the material chosen by the Committee of Readers from the manuscripts submitted for the Arts Forum. The stories and poems printed here will be discussed at the Writing Forum on March 20 by the critics whose names appear on this page. The material for discussion represents undergraduate writing selected from the 159 pieces of verse and 138 of prose submitted from 23 colleges. This year marks the fourth year of the Writing Forum.

Beginning with one mimeographed sheet of four poems by Woman's College students, the first Writing Forum was conducted by Hiram Haydn, editor of *The American Scholar* and a former member of the English faculty.

At the second Writing Forum a Panel headed by Irwin Edman of Columbia University discussed poetry and prose from Woman's College and prose from two other colleges, all of which was presented in a mimeographed booklet.

In 1946 the Writing Forum took a regional character and was representative of undergraduate work from 10 Southern colleges. Lionel Trilling of Columbia University presided over the Panel of Critics.

This year an effort has been made to choose writing representative of work being done by undergraduates in American colleges. For the first time the writing booklet takes printed form as the spring issue of CORADDI. Serious attention from competent critics is usually reserved for writing at the professional level. The CORADDI regards the Writing Forum as an unique attempt to provide criticism of this same seriousness for undergraduate writers.

THE COMMITTEE OF READERS: Virginia McKinnon, Nancy Siff, Betty Sutton, Nancy Sutton; Professors Elizabeth Burroughs, Jane Summerell, Peter Taylor, Sanchia Thayer, Augusta Walker, Marc Friedlaender, *chairman*.

THE COVER is by Lib Jobe and Jean McArn.

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## THE PANEL OF CRITICS:

ROBERT PENN WARREN, Professor of English at The University of Minnesota; poet, novelist, and critic; books of poems: *Thirty-Six Poems*, 1936, *Eleven Poems on the Same Theme*, 1942, *Selected Poems*, 1944; novels: *Night Rider*, 1939, *At Heaven's Gate*, 1943, *All The King's Men*, 1946; co-author of *Understanding Poetry*, 1938, and of *Understanding Fiction*, 1943; short stories and critical articles in a number of magazines, symposia, and anthologies; one of the founders and an editor of *The Southern Review*, 1935-42; member of the Agrarian Group and of the Fugitive Group of Poets; Rhodes Scholar and Guggenheim Fellow; Chair of Poetry, Library of Congress.

WILLIAM BLACKBURN, Associate Professor of English at Duke University; editor of *One and Twenty*; *Duke Narrative and Verse*, 1924-25; contributor to *Modern Philology* and *The Philological Quarterly*; Rhodes Scholar.

LYMAN A. COTTEN, Assistant Professor of English, University of North Carolina.

ROBERT W. DANIEL, Assistant Professor of English, University of Oklahoma; received Yale Poetry Prize, 1939, for his poems *Tennessee Eclogues*, which were published the following year.

CHARLES EDWARD EATON, Assistant Professor of English, University of North Carolina; author of a volume of poetry, *The Bright Plain*, 1942, and of poems which have appeared in *Harper's*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Poetry*, *The American Scholar*, and other magazines.

CLARENCE P. LEE, Professor of English at University of Tennessee; author of two novels, *The Unwilling Journey*, 1940, and *High Noon*, 1943; a third novel, *A Touch of the Sun*, to be published in 1947; Rhodes Scholar.

ROBERT LOWELL, Author of two volumes of poetry, *Land of Unlikeness*, 1944, and *Lord Weary's Castle*, 1946; published critical articles and poems in *The Partisan Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Sewanee Review*, *The Nation*, and other magazines; now living in New York City.

ROBIE MACAULEY, Associate Professor of English at Bard College; contributor to *The Kenyon Review* and other journals.

JOHN E. PALMER, Editor of *The Sewanee Review* and Professor of English at The University of the South; formerly Managing Editor of *The Southern Review*; Rhodes Scholar.

JANE SUMMERELL, Professor of English, The Woman's College.

PETER TAYLOR, Assistant Professor of English at The Woman's College; author of stories which have appeared in *The Sewanee Review*, *The Partisan Review* and other magazines, and in anthologies.

JOHN THOMPSON, JR., Instructor in English at Bard College, author of poems which have appeared in *The Kenyon Review* and in several anthologies.

AUGUSTA WALKER, Instructor in English, The Woman's College; winner of an Avery Hopwood award in the novel.

ELEANOR M. WITHINGTON, Instructor in English at Hollins College.

## Forum on Poetry:

10 a.m. Thursday, March 20

Alumnae House

## Forum on Fiction:

2 p.m. Thursday, March 20

Alumnae House

## MAC HYMAN:

## The Dove Shoot

Daddy got me up about four o'clock that morning of the dove shoot and it was cold and dark outside. When I got out of bed I was shaking all over from the cold. He had shook me and said, "Come on, Paul. Get up and get dressed," and I had climbed right out of bed and started dressing fast and shaking all the time. I cut on the lamp by the bed and I could hear Daddy in the other room getting dressed. It was so cold I put on two sweaters and two pair of socks and a coat.

Daddy came in with his hunting coat on and with his gun under his arm. He had a neat little twelve-gauge pump. He looked red-eyed and cold, but when it come to hunting it didn't matter to Daddy how cold it was, he was up and ready to go. He was really a hunter all right. "You ready, Paul?" he said.

"Yessir, I'm ready," I said. "I'm ready when you are."

We went out the back door and there was Jim standing by the steps like he had been waiting an hour. He was grinning and you could see his white teeth. Jim had worked for us for about three years and even though you were not supposed to carry a nigger with you on a shoot, except maybe to load the guns or chase the birds, Daddy would always let Jim go and help me out. I would let him shoot my gun to show me how. He could really shoot, too. He used to carry me out sometimes when Daddy would let him use the dogs and we nearly always run up a covey. He always got one or two out of a covey. He liked hunting just as much as Daddy and me and I guess that's the reason Daddy liked Jim. When we came out he said, "Lord, yall sho do sleep late round here." As I say, it was still dark, but that was just the way that Jim was always joking with me and Daddy.

We stopped at an all-night restaurant uptown to get some breakfast. Jim waited in the car while me and Daddy went in and ate eggs and toast and coffee. That food really tasted good on that cold morning. The coffee was hot and warmed me up all over. When we left the restaurant and went back into the cold air, I did not feel chilled and shaky any more but warm and comfortable.

Then we drove through the streets of the town and out to the country roads, me and Daddy in the front seat and Jim in the back. It was still cold and dark outside and none of us had anything to say and I cuddled down in my seat, feeling the warm coffee inside me and listening to the purr of the motor. Sometimes on the way out like this Jim would start humming to himself in the back seat. I would close my eyes and lean back and listen to him. You ought to have heard Jim sing. It wasn't singing exactly, I guess, but just sort of a kind of humming. I used to sit in the room and listen to him singing while he was chopping wood out by the barn in the backyard. He had a deep bass voice. I would hear the axe hit and the wood split and all the time hear him singing. He sounded almost like he was crying when he was singing, and I really used to love to listen to him. But this morning I guess it was too cold to be singing, so I just got to thinking about the shoot. I got to praying to God a little bit and asking God to please let me get a few birds this time, anyhow, because I didn't get many chances like this to go on a good shoot on a baited field, and to please just let me get a few. I was so warm and comfortable and was praying so hard that I guess I almost went to sleep there in the corner of the car.

But when we got to the house, I sat up right quick and could feel the inside of me just jumping. I sat right on the edge of the seat and looked at the cars parked around the yard of the house. It was a big white house, all lighted up. I guess there were already ten cars parked out in front. We stopped and Daddy got out and went over to talk with some men standing on the steps while me and Jim got the stuff out of the car. Some of the men stood around the steps and some around the front of one of the cars. Sometimes you could hear one of

them say something and hear the others laugh, and the laughing sounded kind of funny there so early in the morning, way before day.

Then Daddy and the other men went inside the house. He told me and Jim to wait and we sat down on the running board of the car. There were three other niggers but they were sitting on the steps. Me and Jim sat over by ourselves. Jim never did fool around with other niggers much when he was around me and Daddy. He just wouldn't have anything to do with them. They all sort of got out of Jim's way, too, because he was so big. He knew how to fight, too, and it's a good thing none of them ever did fool with him because he used to box when he was up north and he had arms nearly as big around as the upper part of a man's leg, it looked like. Gosh, I sure would hate to have Jim hit me, him being as big as he was and knowing how to handle himself, too.

"You think I might get some this time, Jim?" I said.

"If you shoots right you will. If you jist don git excited and waste you shots."

"You really think I'll ever be able to shoot as good as Daddy?" I asked him. Always when I made a good shot, Jim would say, "You gonna shoot jist as good as your pa someday, boy," and I knew he didn't mean it, but I always liked to hear him say it anyhow.

"Cain't tell. If you try hard, you might someday. If you jist won't git excited. That's what I keeps telling you. They's gonna be plenty of birds. Jist don git excited."

Jim told me that every time we went hunting and I knew he was right, but telling me so didn't help. Gosh, when those birds start coming in, it won't help anybody to tell them not to get excited. I guess some people can do it, though. I know Jim could do it all right.

The front door of the house opened and the men began coming out. They were all laughing and talking and some of them were smoking. The men always went in to have a drink before a big hunt like this one. I don't see what they needed a drink for, myself, but they always did. I saw Daddy coming out of the door, and me and Jim went over to the steps. "You get the shells and everything," he said.

"Yessir. We got everything," I said.

"Well, let's get going."

I guess there were about twenty-five or thirty men there, not counting the three niggers we saw and some others that came up. We walked single file through the path that led through the backyard and down through the pine trees. I walked behind Daddy, and Jim walked behind me. Daddy looked funny from the back in his hunting coat and cap. He was kind of short and stocky built and the coat bulged out on the sides. Up near the front of the line I could hear some men talking and laughing. The wind sounded cold coming through the pine trees and I almost started shaking again.

We came out onto a cleared field and the men started spreading out around the field. Daddy pointed to a place that had a little rise in the ground and said, "Jim, you and Paul go up there and get you a fire to going. I'll start mine right about here." We started to leave and Daddy said, "Just take it easy, Paul, and bring some back this time." Then he smiled at me.

"Yessir. I know I'll get some this time."

"Just don't be hogging any of the men's shots," he said.

"No sir, we won't."

Then me and Jim went on up to the little rise in the ground that Daddy had pointed at. While I went around getting some chunks of wood, Jim got down on his knees and started a little blaze with some splinters. The wind was still right cold and my hands were numb. Finally we got the blaze going big enough to put some chunks of wood on it. All around the field were other fires getting started. It looked just like one big circle about half a mile across with little dots of fire around the rim. "That fire's sho gonna feel good, ain't it?" Jim said.

"My hands are numb already," I said.

"Better git 'em warmed up so's you can shoot that gun."

I sat down on one side of the fire and Jim sat on the other. I sat close to the fire with my legs crossed, holding my gun across my lap. I had a twenty-gauge pump that was a little big for me. Across the field and around the edges you could see the other fires and the men sometimes walking in front of them. Sometimes you could hear somebody yell across the field at somebody else. The man on my right was having trouble getting his fire started and I could hear him cuss every once in a while. I heard some birds flutter overhead, flying low and fast. "You hear that, Jim," I said. I don't know why I whispered. "They will be plenty of 'em, awright. Won't be long fore day now."

We sat for a little while longer, not saying anything and me getting tighter and tighter inside. Finally the dark became a little greyer and across the field and on the sides I could see the men getting up and loading their guns. The birds were fluttering overhead thick and fast now and as it got greyer, I could see the birds themselves. The field had been baited all year and they were really coming in thick. I stood up and loaded my gun. Jim stood up too. My hands were still numb, and I had trouble holding the shells to get them in the chamber. Then I heard a shot across the field. It made me jump. "Just take it easy now," Jim said. "You can see 'em good in a few minutes. Jist don git excited and waste your shots."

After the first shot there was another shot, then there were three more scattered shots and then all of a sudden it was just like the place had busted loose with everybody shooting. You just couldn't hear anything then but the shooting. It was almost a steady roar now from the guns. I stood with my gun under my arm watching them sail in fast and low, holding the butt tight against my ribs, watching them swoop in, raising my gun, lowering it again, waiting for my shot, hearing Jim talking to me, feeling and hearing the buckshot dropping, waiting and waiting, following one that was coming in, seeing it turn and swoop in over the man on the right, watching it closely, seeing it buckle under as the shot came, watching it dive straight for the ground like a rock. And then my bird coming in, straight and low, then dodging and feinting, coming right for me, made for me, all mine, raising my gun, sighting, feeling the jar of the shot, seeing the bird stop in the air, the feathers fluttering, dropping then at an angle, straight and hard for the ground.

I heard Jim yell, "You got 'im. That's shooting! That's the way to shoot!"

Oh, gosh, there was nothing like it. Then I felt looser inside and felt more free and then I began firing faster and faster and began wasting some of my shots, but all the time firing and the birds coming in more and more. The birds were coming in so fast I couldn't load fast enough. Then I got two more and then I was wasting my shots again and then I got one more. Jim was running after the birds I got. He was smiling and yelling at me. Then again I started getting tight inside. I could feel my numb hands aching and could feel the sticky blood coming out from my fingers where the catch beat against them from the jar.

Jim came up again with a bird in his hand. "That's four! That's four awready!"

I lowered my gun. Jim was grinning all over. I looked at him and my face got hot and I thought I was going to blush. Gosh, I felt proud of myself. I was really proud of myself. "You shoot some, Jim," I said.

"Naw. You'se doin fine. You go ahead. You'se doin fine this time."

"You shoot one or two."

"Naw, I loves to see you shoot like that."

"Naw, go ahead," I said.

He took the gun, threw a shell in the chamber and held it in a ready position. He looked like a bird dog pointing standing there. The gun looked little in his hands. The first bird came over, he snapped the gun up, fired, and the bird aimed itself at the ground and started falling. Gosh, he could shoot.

That Jim really knew how to shoot. Just as calm as he could be and just as sure as if he were shooting at a tin can.

I ran to get the bird. It was not dead and I picked it up by the body and cracked its head against a log.

When I got back up there Jim was holding the gun out like he expected me to take it back again. He knew I wouldn't, though. "Shoot some more, Jim," I said. "Ain't any use in me wasting all the shells."

"You was doin fine."

"Shoot some more anyhow."

Jim snapped up and got another, just like that. He could really shoot. I never saw anybody so graceful and so sure when they shot. He was as good as any man there except maybe Daddy, and he was almost as good as Daddy.

I started down to get the bird he had just shot. All over the firing was still going on. It was just a roar and you could hear the buckshot dropping all around over the ground. It was not so cold now and I was feeling a little warmer from the running around. I looked around and saw all the men shooting and some loading and some picking up birds and some of the other niggers going after the birds. I picked up the bird and started back up to the fire where Jim was. He was standing there with the gun at his side waiting for me to tell him to shoot some more. I saw the man that was on our right coming down towards Jim. Jim was waiting for me and didn't see him. The man was walking fast with his gun under his arm. I walked a little faster and got there about the time the man did. He was a fat sort of man with a red face and a big, brown hunting coat. His lips were tight and white.

He walked up to Jim and said, "Who in the hell asked you to this shoot, nigger?"

Jim looked around at the man and then he stepped back a step or two. Jim had his mouth open but did not say anything.

The man said, "Did you hear me, nigger?"

Jim still did not say anything. I said, "I just let him shoot my gun."

The man did not look at me, but kept looking at Jim. His lips were tight against his teeth. "You're a pretty fresh nigger, ain't you?"

I did not know what to do. Jim still did not say anything. The man still looked hard at Jim like he wanted to hit him. I wished Daddy was there. I looked down toward where Daddy was and saw that he was coming up. He was walking kind of fast but looked like he was slow in the big hunting coat.

The man said, "You're a pretty goddamned fresh nigger, ain't you?" The man did not see Daddy coming. "Whose nigger are you?" he said.

Daddy came up then. "What's the trouble, Johnson?" he said.

The man was still looking at Jim. "This your nigger?"

"Yeah. He's showing my boy how to shoot. What's the trouble?"

The man Johnson said, "You better tell your nigger not to be taking my shots if he don't want a belly full of buckshot."

I saw Daddy's face turn white. "Just take it easy, Johnson." The man looked at Daddy. Daddy said, "You better take this up with me."

"Just tell your nigger not to be taking my shots," he said. "One more time and I'll kill the son of a bitch." Then he turned away and walked off. Daddy stood there looking after him. "Jim, you and Paul better go back to the car."

Jim didn't say anything but reached over and got the six birds and put them in his pockets. Then he picked up the gun and the shells and started kicking dirt on the fire to put it out. He scattered out the pieces with his foot and covered each piece carefully with the dirt. Then he started walking back down to the path that led through the pine trees. He didn't look back.

Daddy was still looking after the man Johnson. I stood there a minute and he didn't say anything to me. I said, "Jim didn't steal any of that man's shots, Daddy."

He did not answer me but kept looking after the man Johnson.

"I told Jim to shoot those shots. He didn't steal anybody's

shots," I said. My eyes were burning and I was scared I was going to cry. But I had to tell him how it was.

Daddy looked down at me. "I know it, Paul. I know he didn't."

"He was just mad because he can't shoot," I said. I was about to bawl.

"That's right."

"Well, he didn't have any right to take it out on Jim."

"No. I guess not."

"He said he was going to shoot Jim."

"He won't do that."

"Jim should've clipped him one. Jim could have laid him out with one lick."

Daddy didn't answer but looked back up toward where the man Johnson went. Then he looked straight down at me. "You've got to remember Jim's a nigger, Paul. He just can't hit a white man."

"Why can't he?"

"Then the man would have to kill him."

"Maybe Jim would kill him first."

"Then somebody else would have to get Jim. I might even have to help get Jim if he did that."

I didn't feel like crying any more. "You wouldn't really do that, would you, Daddy?"

Daddy looked away from me back down toward his own fire. "Yes, Paul, I guess I would."

While he stood there looking toward his fire, I tried to make some sense out of it. I never have known Daddy to be wrong about anything much, but no matter how I looked at it, it just didn't make any sense. Then all of a sudden I started crying. "I don't care what you say, I think it's rotten."

Daddy started walking back down toward his place. He did not look at me. "Lots of rotten things got to be, Paul."

He left me there and I walked back through the path through the pine trees. I waited there under the trees for my eyes to dry. Then I went on back to the car. Jim was sitting in the back seat with the birds on his lap. It was warmer now and I took off my jacket and got in the front seat. I could still hear the firing from the car.

## OSCAR EMMETT WILLIAMS:

### A Poem

Such is the force of habit that I here

Long to be alone,

Blood, flesh and bone,

Triumvirate of spacious loneliness,

Inherent hell of naked holiness.

Never in this pose can I but pale,

Embrace an empty bed

Now full of me and dread

Intrusion by some shapeless nada whore

Whose entry makes the longing trio four.

Knowing the secret embraces of an old world

She makes the three aware

That they and she are bare,

That the coldly intellectual occupation

Of solitude must end in consummation.

Or is it that in solitary being

The I as not a *pronoun*

But rather a verbal gown

Nightly hiding not a me but three

Just as the bark conceals the naked tree?

How can I know the inarticulate

Musings of a tree

When of a shameless three

I am but a cape, a box, a creeper

Removed each evening from a nameless sleeper.

What new conceptions of a visual warmth

Were I not thing

Could I then sing!

But the coldly intellectual occupation

Of solitude must end in consummation.

### Art, Gold, and Dejection

Lyssippus, gloried old and statued,

Cold from whimpered askings

Of Apelles, was ejected

By forelocks, buttocks, ears

And vitals, and smeared whole

In a framed community

Of lines, moons, and blues.

Extinctly!

"Take Time,

Lyssippus, by her bangs,

Mine, yours, and always

And quarry your life's blood,

And at 4:12 one a.m.

You've got a cold moment.

And

Consider: your friend's bust

In *your* palm *then*, is *here*

In *mine*, now; and you,

A bit of the Pope's remorse,

You're cold and stiff,

But your friend's bust, warm

(Gold is the mighty furnace,

As Blake was wont to know)

You're still cold and stiff,

Lyssippus, at 4:12 a.m.

Mine, yours, and always."

CLYDE McLEOD:

Hell Bound for Sartin

Zenobie didn't care. She didn't never take stock by what other folks thought about her doings, so long as she done what she wanted. And I can't say as how I didn't sort of admire her for it, though you know I don't mean she done right.

Zenobie was the meanest gal in the county, and they wasn't a man anywheres from Hampton to Bee Log that wouldn't own to it if he was asked. But it wasn't the kind of lying, cheating meanness I'm speaking about; it was the high-stepping, devil-take-it sinful meanness, and she'd be the last one around to try to hide it. You can say one thing. She wasn't in the least wise sneaking.

"Nobie," I've heard her Ma tell her time and again, "Nobie, you'd ought to quit this running around like a heifer in the springtime. You bringing shame on your pore Ma and her not able to git out and defend you."

Zenobie's Ma stayed home most the time. She had ailments.

"It's po circulation," she always said. "Doctor says I got po circulation."

They wasn't nobody lived with her and Zenobie. The Pa hadn't left them. He just hadn't never showed up since before Zenobie was born.

I used to wonder how they ever come through the winter alive. They had their hogs and summers Zenobie worked their garden. She was a good worker when she set her mind to it. But the land was poor. I lowed they must have made something offen it, though, for I never seed 'em to appear hungry. Come fall they had right smart fruit trees, wine saps they was. But I never heard of no one living off apples. And Zenobie had a silk dress, she bought in Hampton.

That's when I first suspected her. And I wasn't the only one. They was talk about her over in the holler where my man's folks lives. And it didn't stop there neither.

She was always pretty free with the boys, even in school, I've heard my Ellie say. "Ma," she'd say, "she grins at 'em so. And at the water bucket she shinnies up to 'em like you ain't never seen."

The older she got, they started more and more coming up to see her. They wasn't all young bucks, and they wasn't all from the Hill. Some of them come all the way from Hampton, and wore store suits. But I never heard of no talk of marrying from Zenobie.

"I'm having my time like it is," she told my Ellie once, "and Ma and me are living fine all right."

The summer she was sixteen was when it got to be the worst. I know Ellie was sixteen the same time. There was somebody up at their house to speak with Zenobie ever night of the week, it seemed like, and all evenings Sundays. It looked to me they thought no other gal was fitting to set up with, but her.

She wasn't pretty. She was just a stringy little thing. But she had a lot of get-up about her, just like her Ma used to, and that's one thing the boys liked, I guess. Her hair, it looked to be the color of sun-ripped corn tassels and it fell to her shoulders. And when Zenobie laughed out, we could hear her over to our place. My man would look at me and twinkle his eye and say, "Zenobie's a'courtin'." Then I'd have to say something distractin' to Ellie setting there by herself.

It was late that summer we had our protracted meeting in the church, with a new preacher from town, Brother Hunter. They ain't nobody I ever heard give a message across like Brother Hunter, and we all went regular ever night. And that's when I got to thinking about Zenobie. We'd pass their house going down to church, and if I didn't hear talking on the porch, I'd hear laughing low down at the other end of the spring house.

I thought about how Brother Hunter said himself from the pulpit that they would be stars in the crown of him that led one sinner to repent. I thought how it would be if somebody could bring Zenobie into the church. Her Ma wasn't never much

hand to go to meeting, so I took it on myself to speak to Zenobie.

At first she sort of made an eye at me and she said she was too busy; but I kept after her ever day and finally on Thursday she said she lowed she'd go that evening if I'd quit pestering her.

We was late and had to set near the back, but that wasn't no matter, for Brother Hunter preaches pretty loud, enough so that those that stay out in the yard can hear. I had spoke to him already of Zenobie and he said how he hoped I'd bring her to him and let him lead her to glory. I had faith in that man, even if he was youngish, for he wasn't nobody's fool. He kept his eye on the back row through the sermon, and I knowed he saw Zenobie and was preaching to her.

She was eyeing some men across the aisle, and one of them was trying to say something to her. But pretty soon I saw that she was took up with what Brother Hunter was saying. He had a real pretty voice that rolled down your back like molasses from out a jug. And when he got warmed up, his eyes would flash out clean to the top of the church. It made me think of the lightning I saw hit our white maple during last April's big storm. And all that time Zenobie didn't move a muscle. She never quit watching his face.

Brother Hunter talked to young folks especially, and said Satan had to be driv out and hell-bound sinners repent, or the world would fall in on our ears and nobody but the good would be saved. He preached as good a sermon as I would a wanted to hear. And they was tears rolling down his nose, big as garden peas, that's how het up he was. He called for the lost to come to the fold and during the hymn he walked among the aisles crying out over the singing to the sinners in the congregation of the righteous. Zenobie never stopped watching him.

I put my arm around her, intending to speak to her. But her back felt like a poker under my hand, she was that stiff. She said, "Leave me be," real sharp.

Brother Hunter was back up front now, but he was looking back at us and Zenobie. He said, right straight to her, with them black eyes:

"Oh, sinner, come home."

And as I set here and breathe, she was off her seat and up to the front before I could know it. They was a heavy pounding in my heart that I couldn't get shut of, and I knowed I was seeing something like a miracle. I watched her get down on her knees at the mourners' bench, and that hair of hers fell clean over the front of her when she put her hands up to her face. She was right still, and didn't move when Brother Hunter come and put his hand on her shoulder. I couldn't but think that made a pretty sight.

After ever'body had left out of the church, she was still up front and Brother Hunter was with her, setting there on the bench patting her hand and talking low to her. He looked up and saw we was waiting at the door.

"You all can go on. I'll see she gets home," he said; and I thought that showed real charity, if ever I saw it.

I was proud as a setting hen to think that I'd had a hand in bringing Zenobie down front, and I went home feeling good, knowing she was in the right company now. That's why I was so put out to hear her voice laugh out late that night, just as if nothing had happened. I wondered which one of the boys was setting up with her.

Next morning I happened to run by their house, and I just asked her. "Zenobie," I says, "not that it's my business, but I thought the preacher brung you safe home last night."

"Oh," she says, "he did. Real safe."

"Then what did you do?"

"Why, I come on to bed when he left."

I don't have to tell you I was some surprised to find out it was Brother Hunter up there, and making her laugh out like she was. But I figured that was his business and the Lord's, and I said nothing but to ask her was she going to meeting that night. She said she guessed she was, but she didn't seem none too set up about it. I watched her looking down at her hands

a lot during the service. I hadn't never saw Zenobie looking that sheepy before. But I knowed she was realizing her sins. She didn't never look across the aisle a time, or anywhere but at Brother Hunter and at her hands. I could see he talked at her again that night. When the service was over we all went up to shake hands with the preacher, but Zenobie. She stayed at the side door and waited.

Brother Hunter asked where we'd left Zenobie, and he went over to her. I saw he spoke something low to her, and laid his hand on her shoulder gentle. Then they took out the door together, and that's all we saw of 'em. That's the first time ever I saw a preacher leave without speaking to one and all around the church aforehand.

We set out soon after, half expectin' to meet Brother Hunter coming back from Zenobie's, for he had long legs and looked to be a good walker. But we never met him.

Just when we passed Zenobie's house, I stopped.

"Pa," I said, "I'd a swore I heard voices coming from over to the spring house."

Pa and Ellie stood with me, and I could notice Ellie's eyes getting big in the moonlight.

We could hear a voice soft like molasses. "Zenobia, I'm begging you for the last time. Will you go?"

"No, sir, I'll have no more truck with you." I looked at Pa, but he didn't look back at me. "You ain't to be trusted," we heard Zenobie say. "Even if you wasn't lying, I couldn't go. I got Ma."

"Zenobia, think about yourself. You're too good for these people."

"I'm plumb ashamed to hear you say that. And you a preacher."

"Shh, Zenobia, don't raise your voice. Come on, Sugar, I and you could leave here tonight, and you'd never have to come back."

Zenobie sounded like a fighting banny rooster. "Git your cheating hands off me, afore I light in on you." We could hear her plain as day.

Then there was a laugh that sounded like Brother Hunter, except not quite. Before I could stop Pa, he was down toward the spring house, and he hollered, "What you want I should do, Nobie?"

Just at that time I saw somebody with legs long as a new filly run out the lower side of the spring house and head cross the field past our new tobacco barn.

I don't know when he quit running or where he come out at. All I know is we didn't have meeting next night. Brother Hunter sent word he had been called back to town for a important preachers' meet. But Pa went down on business, and found out he wasn't in Hampton. Didn't no one seem to know where he was.

Last night was another one of them clear moon nights, and we could hear Zenobie laugh out clean over here.

"Ellie," I says, "you know, sometimes it strikes me they is something right pretty about her."

## MARION BURDINE:

### A Pastoral

No elegy, no doleful tragedy,  
No dirge of death, or mournful monody  
Will ever call my broken reed its own,  
Nor sad eternity nor cold renown  
Will know my name or sing my pastoral song.

Awake ye tender buds, dewy, clean,  
Spread your lace, and shade our velvet green.  
Ye restless flock, stay awhile with me,  
Listen to my rustic symphony!  
Inheritors of eternal Spring,  
Lift high your voices and with us sing.

Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan.  
Apollo fair is on his golden throne.  
The balmy air is soft, the hillside green,  
And fragrant breezes sweep the meadows clean.  
Muses awake and join our happy throng;  
Ye tuneless nine, come sing my pastoral song.

No more shall tympani of immortal wrath  
Stun the ear and blind the shepherd's path,  
Nor heavy cadence roll on roll unfold  
In hollow tones like somber chants of old.  
Ye gentle breezes, softly pluck the string,  
And help create the harmony of Spring.

No more shall Boreas nip the tender buds,  
Nor pound the frozen earth with icy floods,  
Nor drive the robin from its chosen nest,  
For Spring is here and love is manifest.  
Ye woods, ye velvet meadows, echo long  
The strange enchantment of my pastoral song.

A golden mist surrounds the purple hills,  
And all around a honeyed fragrance spills.  
The ripples spread along the living tide.  
Sweet fortune smiles, and youth is glorified.  
Pan awake! Ye nymphs awake and sing!  
The world is yours to love, and it is Spring.

As branches bend the soft earth to caress  
And kisses steal, O lovely Lycidas,  
So must you live to build the lofty rhyme.  
Soon you will bend in humbleness to Time.  
But now sweet Lycidas, awake and sing!  
The world is fresh and green, and it is Spring.

Sweet love and life awake the self-same day,  
And sun and wind and clouds and stars obey,  
Lifting young hearts above the crusty sod,  
Teaching them the harmony of God.  
So, nymphs and shepherds, let sweet music flow  
That others' ears than mine your song may know!

My song is ending now; yours just begun.  
Your song will echo when my song is done.  
So, muses, give eternal inspiration,  
And unto every rising generation  
Call to life the melody of Spring!

## RALPH WILLIAM HYDE:

### Gabe and the Will of God

The veterinarian looked into the eyes of the old farmer hovering over him. He turned to the bull beside him and laid his hand regretfully on the quivering neck of the animal.

"It's no use, Mr. Abernathy," he said. "If I could have only gotten to him sooner, perhaps I could have done something. But both his hind legs have compound fractures, and gangrene has set in. It's a wonder he's still alive."

Gabe Abernathy looked vehemently at the precipice over which the bull had fallen. The grass and bushes were trampled down and lay horizontally out from the bank. Hoof marks showed in the wall where the bull had struggled to regain firm ground, but the ledge had crumbled, and he had fallen to the rocks below.

"It's all of forty feet to the bottom," Gabe said. "He must have been lying here three or four days. I went to Nashville for a week, and the last time my wife remembered seeing him was the third day after I left. He must have been here three days, at least."

The veterinarian opened his bag and pulled out a syringe. He placed a needle on the syringe and filled the syringe with liquid from a rubber-capped bottle.

"I can kill him easily with strychnine," he said gently. "He's going to die soon, anyway. It will be better than letting him die slowly."

Gabe walked over to the bull and stood in front of him. The bull was breathing hoarsely. His right horn was broken at the base and it dangled over his forehead. Gabe touched the cold nose of the bull. The bull tried to rise, but his forelegs crumpled under him and a moaning rumbled in his throat.

Gabe turned and looked up the ravine.

"Go ahead and get it over with," he said shortly. "I paid twelve hundred dollars for him. I mortgaged next summer's tobacco crop to buy him, and all I got out of him was five heifers bred and three months service."

The veterinarian plunged the needle into the bull's throat and pressed the liquid into his jugular. The bull convulsed throughout his great body, and his head sank to the ground. The two men walked up the ravine to a place where the wall slanted like the side of a funnel. They climbed up the wall to the pasture. They walked across the pasture, their shadows extending in long caricatures behind them. Beyond the pasture the forest was red and gold. A crisp wind came from the north, and the grass rustled uneasily. Gabe laughed harshly.

"I had planned to take the cattle off pasture today and put them on dry feed in the barns. And now I have to come back with a shovel and throw dirt over the finest hunk of purebred beef in the county."

When they reached the house Gabe asked the veterinarian to stay for supper, but he declined. Gabe paid the five-dollar fee and entered the house from the rear. He hung his felt hat on a nail in the kitchen. Martha was cooking supper. She waited for him to tell her.

"We had to kill him," Gabe said.

"Oh," she said.

At the table Gabe looked at Martha who sat white and thin before him. He had not understood Martha for the past two years. For thirty years their lives had gone on comfortably, and at times happily, together. Ten years after their marriage they had had a son on whom they poured all the love which had accumulated inside them. Then two years ago Dan had been killed in the Marines, and Martha had withdrawn into herself. Except for the people at the church, which she never failed to attend, she saw no one but Gabe. And she had withdrawn even from him. One night long after the death of their son when Gabe had come to her bed she had denied him violently, and, baffled, he had never tried to resume the old intimacies with her.

Martha had continued cooking their meals, but she seemed

to have lost all pride in keeping the house clean and orderly. Instead, she sat upon the sagging sofa in the living room and read the Bible for hours at a time, and often Gabe, when he returned from work in the fields, would find her there, kneeling on the floor with her face in the dusty cushions, her neck more distended than ever and the veins in her throat bulging fiercely in a paroxysm of self-abasement.

Tonight as he looked at her, Gabe hated Martha and Martha's God. He hated her for her lack of concern over the loss of the bull, and he hated her God for having made her so alien to him.

"I am a religious man, Martha," Gabe said. "I have worshiped God all my life. I have lived the best way I know how to live. I never drank, or gambled, or ran around with women. But for three years my tobacco crops have not even paid the fertilizer bills. Each time I doubted, but I believed again. When Dan was killed I didn't believe for a while. But I believed again, though maybe not as much. And then because I couldn't borrow more on the land, I mortgaged next year's tobacco crop to buy that bull, and the bull fell into a gulley, and I had to kill him." Gabe's voice rose. "And all the time," he cried, "there's Sam Dickson next door who sneers at God and sneers at us because we believe in Him; a city-bred man with his citified way of scorning them that has grown up on the land, and he beats me at my own game. His crops never fail like mine do, his two sons never had to go to war to get shot at, and his herd of cattle is better than mine, though he started his later."

Gabe got up from the table and stood looking out the window, feeling choked and defeated. Martha sat at the table plucking at the cloth with her fingers. When she began to speak, it was as if she were alone. Or rather, Gabe thought bitterly, as if she and God were there, and Gabe somewhere outside in the dark.

"When Dan was taken," she quavered, "I couldn't understand at first. But one night when I was praying, it came to me in a blinding light, like Paul on the road to Damascus, that God took Dan because He wanted Dan up there. And when I knew it was God's will, I felt all thankful inside. It was God's will, and we can't question God's will." She looked at Gabe's back uncertainly. "Remember Job," she said. "Job had the most sufferings of anybody who ever lived. But Job believed. The Bible says 'the rain falls alike upon the just and the unjust.'"

"I wouldn't feel so bad about it," he said, "if it was really alike for all of us. As it is, Dickson is always luckier than I am."

Gabe turned from the window. Martha was staring before her with her hands folded in her lap and her lips were moving in prayer. Gabe shivered, and without saying a word he walked into his bedroom where he lay on the bed and watched through the open door while Martha washed the dishes. She was still praying. Gabe cursed and was surprised to find that he felt better.

The next morning when Gabe was going to the general store he met Dickson on the road in front of Dickson's house. Dickson greeted him cheerfully.

"I hear you lost your fine bull yesterday," Dickson said.

"Yeah," Gabe said darkly. "He broke both hind legs, and I had to kill him."

"Since you lost your bull I guess mine is the best in the county," Dickson said.

"Yeah, I guess he is," Gabe said. He felt he could choke this little, pig-eyed man who stood with bowlegs thrust widely apart looking merrily at him.

"Well, when you need a bull you can always use mine," Dickson said. "Why don't you come in the house and have a drink? The missus won't mind, and the boys don't live with me any more. Nobody'll ever know." He laughed insinuatingly.

For a moment Gabe had a strange desire to get drunk, very drunk, and to confront Martha. He wondered how she would react. But the thought of drinking with Dickson nauseated him.

"No thanks; I never touch it," he said, moving away from Dickson.

"Going to church tomorrow?" Dickson called after him. Gabe

did not answer, and he thought he heard a chuckle behind him. Gabe looked at Dickson's large farmhouse and the shaded lawn. Behind the house in the barnyard thirty or forty Hereford cattle were eating freshly-baled hay. The outbuildings were all painted, and the barns were crammed with alfalfa. Gabe shook his head uncomprehendingly and walked slowly toward the store, his feet dragging in the gravel of the county road.



The winter was a severe one. Of the five heifers that had been bred by the prize bull, three miscarried, and one died. And of the two calves that dropped in the early spring, only one seemed a credit to the sire, for the other was undersized and had to be fed from a bottle. Gabe worked about his cold barns, contrasting his bad luck with the good fortune of Dickson who was able with little effort to bring his cattle safely through the winter. Martha was no comfort to him, and Gabe went glumly about his work feeling a dull hate for Dickson growing inside him.

He attempted to burn some undergrowth near the forest, and a changing wind carried the flames racing through the trees, leaving half his timberland blackened and ruined. The seed corn which he had selected from the past year's crop was eaten in the crib by rats, and he had to buy more for spring planting. And always when he spoke of these things to Martha she exhorted him to be "patient and long-suffering" until Gabe began to feel a helpless anger gripping his stomach.

But when the spring rains came and the land lay mucky and receptive, Gabe felt a thrill of optimism. His tobacco seedlings had grown sturdily, and the sun had given the stalks a toughness that augured a good crop. Gabe hired two Negro boys to help him transplant the seedlings, and the three worked with hand-pegs, barefooted in the fields, until eleven acres lay waiting for the sun and the rain.

When the stalks began to grow tall and the leaves began to stretch wide and long, Gabe felt more friendly toward Dickson. Dickson's field of tobacco bordered his. Between the two fields a rail fence served as the boundary and as a barrier to cattle when the fields were given to pasture. Often Gabe met Dickson under a tree at the fence and they talked about the crops, glad to escape the sun. But when Dickson swung the conversation to religion Gabe shifted about uneasily on his side of the fence.

"Look at what God has done for you and what the devil has done for me," Dickson said one day. He pointed toward his buildings in the distance and his pastures dotted with cattle. Gabe was shocked, and he searched for a way to answer him. At last he came out with the sort of platitude that trembled on Martha's lips, and Dickson laughed and returned chuckling to his plow.

When the tobacco was almost grown and the corn gave promise of becoming a bumper crop, the drought came. The creeks sank into a trickle or dried up entirely, the pastures turned brown, and the tobacco and corn leaned about the fields in various angles of dejection. Gabe walked with a hoe about the tobacco seeking despairingly for moisture around the roots, but every hole he dug filled with tiny grains of soil that were fluid like bird shot held in the palm.

Gabe saw Dickson in the adjoining field, and he threw the hoe upon his shoulder and walked to the fence that separated the two farms. He leaned upon the fence and waited for Dickson to come to him. He saw that Dickson's tobacco was even more wilted than his own. Gabe exulted silently. Dickson was puffing when he reached the fence. He wiped his face and neck with a bandana.

"Whew," he said. "This is the worst dry spell we've had in the seven years I've been living here."

"Looks like the devil has failed you this time," Gabe said.

Dickson looked quickly at Gabe. Little pools of contempt shined in his eyes. He looked at the stricken tobacco behind him.

"If he has, it's the first time," Dickson said. And he added, his red eyes grinning wickedly, "something is bound to happen

soon. I've been praying to ole Lucifer for the past week for a rainstorm."

Gabe drew back from him, appalled, and Dickson burst into laughter. He raised his face toward the sun and laughed until tears ran down his dirty cheeks. Gabe left him still laughing and strode angrily toward the house. Martha was washing clothes on the porch. She started when Gabe stepped upon the porch so violently that the house quaked.

"How in the name of heaven," Gabe shouted, "can Dickson blaspheme the way he does without being struck down? He just told me he was praying to the devil for rain."

Martha gasped. Her thin lips began twitching. Gabe knew she was praying for Dickson.

"Dickson is like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand," Martha said. "It is God's will that no harm shall come to him until in His own good time God shall make an example of him. If Dickson can pray to Satan for rain, surely you can pray to God for rain. You have never let God help you, Gabe," she went on sadly. "You have hardened your heart against Him, and He cannot help you as long as your heart is hardened. Tonight at the church we are going to pray for rain, and I want you to go with me."

Gabe looked bitterly at the grass on the lawn. The curled leaves dipped over until the tips stuck into the dust. Beyond the lawn where the fire had swept through the forest the new undergrowth leaned exhausted against the blackened hulks of oaks and poplars. The wind brought to Gabe the odor of burnt leaves.

On a hill an oak reared its bare arms toward the sky. Gabe knew the oak would fall before a moderate wind. It was true, Gabe thought. He had tried to do everything alone, and he had failed. Perhaps Martha was right. Anyway, it couldn't do any harm to ask God for help.

"I'll go tonight," he said, feeling uncomfortable. "I don't see how God can keep from letting it rain if we ask Him in a proper way."

That evening Gabe and Martha dressed in their Sunday clothes to walk to the church. Martha carried her ever-present Bible, and Gabe carried a battered flashlight which he kept turning toward the skies as if he hoped to see there an ocean waiting for the command to descend. When they passed Dickson's house Gabe said, "I wonder if he's praying to the devil now!"

When they reached the church a cool wind had sprung up. A farmer in shirt sleeves said to Gabe, "I think we have God on our side tonight." Inside the church the organ started playing. The music rolled down the steps and wrapped about the people talking under the trees. They entered the church, and soon the seats were filled, and the walls were lined with people standing. The minister stood by the pulpit fondling the watch chain which swung in a yellow arc across his stomach.

"We have assembled here tonight to pray to our merciful Father in Heaven for rain to end the drought," he said. "Let us become as little children as we approach the throne of God."

At a signal from the minister the organist played "There Is Power in the Blood," and the congregation caught up the words and soon the voices drowned out the organ. Rain struck the roof. A tremor ran through the people, and they sang with greater vigor, tapping their feet to the music. Prayers alternated with the singing. The rain became so violent the windows had to be closed, and even then it crept about the frames and sprayed upon the people. Gabe opened the hymnbook, and held it awkwardly with Martha and joined his bass to the chorus. For the first time in years Gabe felt close to God.

After the organist had played "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing," Gabe moved from his seat. The minister raised his hand for silence, and the people all looked at Gabe. Gabe stood blinking before the congregation, his arms and legs tingling with a vitality he thought had drained out of him.

"I have been a backslider," Gabe said. "I turned my back on God and I quit going to church regular, like I should. I hardened my heart against God. But as I hear the rain falling in

answer to our prayers, I believe, and I want to be restored to Grace, and I want all of you to pray for me so I can be a better man from now on."

The minister asked the congregation to pray for Gabe. The minister knelt before the pulpit and prayed for Gabe to be restored to Grace. Gabe felt released from the oppression that had held him for so many years. Martha laid her hand upon his arm and her warmth gave him comfort.

The service ended and the people crowded around Gabe to welcome him back into the church. From one of them he accepted the offer of a ride home. Gabe tucked a hymnbook under his arm, explaining shyly that he was a "little rusty" and needed practice. Martha clutched the flashlight in her lean fingers. They sat huddled together on the back seat of the car as it wallowed over the muddy road. The lights in Dickson's house snapped off as they passed. When the car stopped to let them out Gabe helped Martha from the car, and they walked arm in arm across the lawn. Gabe stepped on a stone, and he bent over to pick it up.

"I thought I had picked up all the rocks in the yard," he said. He drew his arm back to throw the stone from the lawn, but he arrested his arm before the arc was completed. The hymnbook tumbled to the ground. Gabe seized the flashlight and turned it upon the object in his hand. It was a hailstone as big as his fist. With a strangled cry Gabe turned the flashlight upon the lawn. From a thousand points in the grass hailstones, shining and refractive, winked back at him.

With a terrible oath Gabe flung Martha from him and ran stumbling toward his tobacco, the light dancing upon the ground. He screamed aloud at what he saw. Half the leaves were torn from the stalks and they lay embedded in the mud. Those remaining on the stalks were perforated in a dozen places. Gabe ran wildly about the field, and he saw everywhere the naked stalks and the mangled leaves lying under a great weight of mud and hail. The crop was a total loss. No part had been spared.

Dazed, Gabe found himself at the fence where he had so often talked with Dickson. He turned the flashlight toward Dickson's tobacco. It was intact. Gabe scrambled over the fence and walked in Dickson's field, thrusting the light quickly from one plant to another. Not a leaf was broken. The plants had lost their apathy, and the leaves stuck out from the stalks, green and full. They appeared to have grown six inches since midday.

"The man's a devil," Gabe shouted, and he hurled the flashlight toward the tobacco. It tore through the plants and thudded to the ground, still shining. Gabe leaped over the fence and

ran toward the house, pursued by an army of hailstones winking at him. The hailstones became the jeering, pig-eyes of Dickson.

Gabe seized a can of gasoline from the porch and a box of matches from the kitchen where Martha shrank from him, astounded. He struck into the road and, cursing and sobbing in the dark, he ran toward the house where Dickson lived. When he entered the lawn he became silent. He slipped to the corner of the house and flung gasoline about the windows. He hurled gasoline about every possible exit, and then he crawled through a basement window and flung gasoline upon the under-structure of the building. He struck a match and threw it into the basement, and a long pencil of flame leaped out and singed his face. Still holding the empty can, Gabe ran to the barns and dropped matches upon the hay in the buildings. He ran, possessed, from building to building until all were ablaze. Then he walked back to the house and stood on the lawn and watched fascinated as the flames jumped from window to window and crackled about the eaves.

Gabe heard screams inside. They were the shrill screams of a woman. Gabe waited impatiently. Then he heard Dickson. His cries began on a low note and curved upward and ended in a squeal. A shadow came flying up the road, and Martha entered the circle of light where Gabe stood.

"Are they in there?" she screamed at him.

Gabe looked at Martha, surprised. He had thought she understood. He would have to make it very clear to her.

"He is a devil," Gabe said. "It is God's will. God had to make an example of him."

Martha saw the empty can and matchbox in his hand.

"You set it on fire yourself!" she accused, horror-stricken, pulling at his arm.

He struck her in the face, and she swayed to the ground where she lay staring at him. Blood flowed over the white, twisted mouth and dribbled down her chin.

"It is God's will," Gabe repeated stubbornly, and he turned toward the fire.

Far away a bell was ringing violently. Little stabs of light flecked the countryside, and cars roared madly toward the fire. Gabe listened to the bell ringing. The screams in the burning house annoyed him. The roof reared crazily and sank slowly in the middle. The screaming stopped, and Gabe smiled happily; the bell sounded much prettier.

Gabe did not know where the bell was, but he thought it must be inside him. He opened his mouth to toll like a bell, but his voice came out harsh and discordant and not like a bell at all.

## WINSTON WEATHERS:

### Dance of the Daring Dancer

Gold as a whore in a single sleep, and red  
As the closet's velvet gown  
That is the way I come to see,  
Assault and see and find the town.  
Young and vital and soft and free,  
I with little history  
Onto the black and sullen street, I dance  
A gaudy dance and meet  
The shadow's naked glance  
With amber feet  
And cardinal hands  
That clang a golden stick and break a globe,  
Reddish and crystal and thin and fair,  
Onto the empty cobblestones.

Gold as the breast is gold at dawn, and red  
As a wicked soul lies down  
That is the way I come to see,  
Assume and see and find the town.  
Brisk and bright and fertile and fine,  
I of lavish and long design  
Swing my eyes like two tin lamps, and break  
My laughter on the night and wake  
The silence of the street  
With pounding hands  
And burning feet.  
I cry a day into the dark and stir  
Old women from their dreams,  
Red and gold and rich and bold,  
I call a brittle trumpet to the wind,  
And dance a yesterday, today,  
Today, tomorrow, and away.

**ROGER HECHT:****To One in Loneliness at the Long Retreat**

(after Robert Graves)

Only one sin staggers the sun  
 Or fixes wild direction on the wind  
 Or tears the body down and breaks the bone.  
 This is a deed Teiresias cannot prophesy:  
 No wise man can reveal what shakes the sky.

Do you think of Adam in a grove  
 Surrounded by sweet fruits and luscious beasts  
 Moving towards his swift descent on Eve  
 To make her luscious body full  
 And sweet, and rounded as a wave?

Do you think of Christ on the rack  
 Forced by stupid men to swing a cross  
 To His own grave and there be stuck  
 And fed with knives, staved and dead,  
 And stinking in a Hell too small for us?

Disaster on disaster fill the hours  
 And the sea: from dumb, rough rock,  
 From a sharpened knife, from a leaning in a perilous tower,  
 From a poison that turns the night into a wake,  
 Comes the last moment, comes the eternal shock.

Do you think of dread Prometheus,  
 Or Faustus gathering his powers  
 To strike a vengeance on God and us  
 And kill Him like a harmless fly  
 And kill us as if we were merely sleepers?

Or do you think of Hamlet in the dark  
 Who could not join his body and his mind  
 Into the fullness of his final work  
 And even when the work was done could not respect his grave  
 But sent another out to sell his tale?

The wind continues sane, the sun is well,  
 Your body is not broken yet you linger lonely,  
 But there is time to tell and time to skill  
 You from becoming one like Dido who, on the wane,  
 Reaped one sin and one sin only.

That sword is cold and let it so remain:  
 Disaster on disaster have arrayed  
 These ghostly references of biting pain  
 That hands and fictive dreams have made.  
 Æneas, too, was lonely but went on to Rome.

**JOHN O. ENDERS, II:****Dead in a Quick World Watching**

Becoming, clamp a limb on death.  
 So, if torn sheer from life of limbs,  
 Still-living strategies of breath  
 Will grow in shade, when brilliance dims,  
 To resurrect the rose.

And going, split a golden year.  
 The image shall, though dead to time,  
 Bestir the pulse upon such gear  
 As grinds a gold in blood and ryme  
 To resurrect the rose.

**GEORGE HEMPHILL****Fragment of an Ode**

The history of our county paltries  
 Two quaint lovers who sought in it their fancy,  
 Who discovered and mapped it for their ends  
 Deaf to our river till they knew its banks  
 As night fishermen poised from their hollow boat,  
 Heating the black air with a bullseye lamp,  
 Stab at fish who breed in peace when they pass  
 While ten yards away the audible frost  
 Dooms the innocent purpose the grass has.

For summer and for winter the year prepares,  
 Not for fertility and death; they loved  
 In the new world's year, in that same null age  
 When suns made snow, and brought the glare again  
 Only to be stolen away by the moon.

Their heavy step crashed all night through the thicket  
 Full of mist the secret parts of the year  
 In valleys as long as a man can walk:

For seeking their own wisdom they never sleep;  
 And though their eyes shine as early as the dew  
 Dew only images their tiger stare.  
 Bothering the seasons' plausible hills,  
 Shod with brass slippers, armed with bayonets,  
 They sever the twilight peering to find  
 A place to love that will contain the earth.

**EDGAR BOWERS:****Walk on the Village Perimeter**

Now of an opaque porcelain  
 Aglaze upturned. Extended strings strain  
 In the redundant throat of the calm.

(The candid reflector may find  
 The blunt beginning, unmarked and untimed,  
 From the plow waste crushed in the palm.)

Now of silent shadow the hour dimensioned  
 Village accentuated to the untensioned  
 Columns of the viscous night balm.

(Engraved in the ticking observation a simile  
 Of patterned caprice in a wind deranged tree.)

**VIRGINIA McKINNON:****Gossamer**

It was such a THEREfore thing to do  
 a line of  
 this  
 and  
 that  
 S,  
 because  
 alluding to my heart  
 you felt that I was quite unsure  
 and would not serve your presentfutureneed  
 or maybesomewhat  
 on the crick  
 et  
 side.

## DOUGLAS NICHOLS:

### Death of a Grandmother

Rose-water scent dissolved the useful room  
From ready bottles, Bible, careful blinds  
Arranged for patient death, to impress our minds  
With awe of grace that gasped no fear of tomb.

Her breath short-stated now, her ancient sight  
Distorting light to form a roseate glow  
Around not-me, not-you; why should she know  
We were never the tintypes sought at night?

Past shuttled present: You enhanced the Ball,  
Leading her to the rose-bright dais where  
Abe Lincoln stooped from his imperious chair  
To dance her on his knee like a choice doll.

Deprived, we think it better not to mar  
Picture of nurse, prompt as the curse of the clock,  
But offering roses springing her heart back  
To living words, "How sweet the roses are."

### The Village Genius

The elders chatted while he walked the town,  
Along the graveyard green with flesh, the stones  
Eloquent of white and marble peace:  
Where was the towering column to his release,  
Where the durable crypt for mortal bones;  
Where was the landmark he could call his own?

Snickering like Peeking Tom over his shoulder,  
Each voice enlarged the riveters' crescendo  
Until he fled the crashed discord of sound;  
And saw, as he passed the Public School ground,  
His owl-eyed teacher pierce her moral window—  
She who was wise and old; but he was older.

## EDGAR WATKINS:

### The Invaders

Snipers in the furious growth we watched for  
Tangling the air with fiery sprouts at night;  
These lay for us at dawn to prick and gather,  
Brightened the dull breeze with the fear they brought.

Tanks with their bursting buds that flew like quail  
Whose eye was red-black as the night-fired ponds  
Melted men marching, flesh grew gray and fell,  
The red-fired sky distilled to creeper wounds.

The night put forth its orchid-buds in holes;  
Our dreams were monstrous-sweet, bayonet-tipped,  
We plucked the bloom that gorged upon our gall  
And woke to find the wild grass bullet-cropped.

Guns that had laid the mad trees made our path;  
We followed where their seed had spread and lay  
On sprung thorns the shrapnel contended with.  
Our blood where the thorns died was bright as dew.

### Touchstone

This actor-boy, this child of many parts,  
In red and yellow doublet, half and half,  
With impish image stuck upon a staff  
Plays playful Touchstone, mocker King of Hearts.

A child himself, to children's eyes appealing,  
He charms them with the wiggle of his toe;  
They pantomime with him the mimic-show  
While parents pick his text for subtle meaning.

From his bedazzled vantage point down-stage,  
He sees reflect Adulthood's glassy eyes,  
But finds response in children's liquid eyes,  
Absorbed in Arden woods, not Avon sage.

And at the close of Wednesday's matinee,  
When children rush to reenact a scene,  
Parents will offer comments kind and mean:  
In short, "You were the perfect Fool today."

### Inland

When they said you can hear the sea in a shell,  
I could. And still I hear the giant fan  
Blowing imagination from the swell  
Of memory to spray the future span;  
For what is past will be; where the gulls played  
To snatch their shimmering prize, there I will fly,  
An osprey dipping where choice bait has strayed,  
Flapping my sea-food lust against the sky.  
But motor-charged and monotonic now,  
This wind tunnel moans from the Ocean of Loss  
Where Ariel is mute, and limp on the bow  
Of a stalled ship, a defeated Albatross:  
Rein to sport again the galloping sea;  
It is the washed and rushing part of me.

### The Churchgoers

These who know from pressed words the world's glory  
And sin, for one Word all their words relinquish;  
These come, hang their words up in the doorway,  
Sing Joy and Fear in unique verbal anguish.

These read a lamplit hundred words, and all  
Are one—the Word—the light, words, mentioned joys:  
Joys are sins are God, look up from earth, call  
As sunshine bringing school for little boys.

Body that flung us on the green lawn knew  
Us not, nor we it till the master said,  
"Sing Body, Body," and the body flew  
Without air, or wings; and later we read  
Of Body, so the body fleshless grew.  
We fling the Word, we sing the body fed.

### God

Who sits among the tangled leaves to see  
Them leaves, while we see nothing short of jungle;  
Who watching from the window sees us tangle  
In hopeless thicket when we know we're free.

Being the chains with which we bind our limbs,  
He holds our flesh, and knows we are not held,  
But known, as loved by lover, for until  
We asked his arms our own were sticks to him.

## VIRGINIA MCKINNON:

## Charlie

The first time I ever saw Charlie was when I worked at Beaman's Bargain Basement before I got the job driving for the Funeral Home. He was just another customer coming down the steps under the blue and orange neon. All kinds of people came down those steps—black and white and black white and white black—and all they meant was a number with a dollar mark in front of it if you could talk fast enough and hold the shoes or the overalls away from the light so the pasteboard inner-sole and the starch filler didn't show. You watched them come down the stairs and spit a mouthful of brown snuff or tobacco juice into the step corners and untie the knot in a dirty handkerchief or unroll a stocking top for a dollar bill wrapped around a piece of money, and you took the money and made a mark on the back of your salesbook and hoped to God it didn't rain the first time they wore the shoes. You forgot what the mark meant to them because enough of the marks on the back of your book meant an extra dollar added in the yellow envelope with your name on it. And you stood with the vultures at the bottom of the steps and stopped talking when you saw a foot start down the steps so you'd be ready to say, "Could I help you" when the foot hit the second from the bottom step.

Nigger women would come in with a string knotted for the different sizes of shoes they wanted or a whittled down stick the length of the kid's foot and you knew the shoes wouldn't fit, but after a while you stopped trying to tell them to bring the children and hoped you'd be out to lunch when they came back for the exchange. But the nigger men usually bought overalls, and the day Charlie came in I spotted him before he was halfway down the steps, before the other boy who worked on the Men's Side had time to quit flirting with the cashier. He was heading over toward Piece Goods.

"I want to look at some silk strips," he said. It was a high, thin pitch like a boy's before his voice changes, and his cheeks were smooth with a soft fuzz. "This here is a pretty pattern," he said, touching the silk like a woman fingers cloth, thinking how it's going to look made up in a dress. The hands were plump and sinuous, moving over the cloth, pulling out each piece with the polished finger tips. "Wrop me up a yard of this here," he said, smiling while I measured the cloth.

"Can you sew?" I asked.

"Yes, suh, I made this waist." He touched the blue satin blouse under his overalls.

I didn't know what to make of him except he was as harmless as most niggers, and his money was as good as anybody else's money. He took a little snap pocketbook out of the apron opening and felt around for a fifty-cent piece, and then held his hand up to his mouth and spit a dime out between his teeth. I'd been working long enough to be used to that, but it was funny to see a man carrying money in his mouth. Anyway I took the money on the cloth and handed it to the girl in the cashier's box.

"Who's your customer?" she giggled, looking back at Charlie standing against the counter waiting for his change.

"Never saw him before," I said and pressed down the end of the "Buy the Best at Beaman's" tape.

"Him?" she laughed and bent over the cash tray, shaking her shoulders with laughter.

"You'd look goddam cute with a strip of this tape on your filthy mouth," I said; and the shoulders straightened up quick; and her little red tongue shot out at me like a frog snatching flies, only pointed instead of forked.

"And who do you think you are? Talking to a lady like that?" she said and tossed her head around in a jerk.

I figured I'd already said too much, so I just turned back to Charlie standing there with his eyes popped open, clutching his pocketbook, and holding out a hand for the money. "Fifty-two, fifty-three, fifty-four, fifty-five, sixty cents and here's your

package. Come back to see us." I said it all steady and even like I had said it a thousand times before, and Charlie doubled his hand around the money and looked back at the girl like he wanted to say something and couldn't make up his mind. Then he turned and slid against the counter edge and around the banister knob past the clerks, looking up at the stairs like he hoped they wouldn't see him.

I wasn't even going to look at the cashier talking to her cronies in Ready-to-Wear, loud for my benefit. "Did you hear what that smart aleck said to me? I wouldn't repeat it. Him calling *me* filthy . . ." I was mad, but I was going to stand there and act like nothing had happened, and then I saw the boy gooch Charlie and grab the package.

"What you got there, Charlie? Gonna make a dress for your sweetheart?" He laughed around at the girls and slapped his hands on his knees, laughing like he had pulled a chair out from under God Almighty.

"It's not that funny," I said. "Give him the cloth. He paid for it."

"What business is it of yours?" he said, riled because everybody had stopped laughing at his joke. "Charlie and I always have a little fun together, don't we, Charlie?"

Charlie looked at him, white circles of pleading eyes. "Yes, suh, but I got to go now, please suh."

"Well, go then," the boy said and tossed the package high over Charlie's head. "Come back to see us, Charlie," he said, laughing.

Charlie bent over to pick the package up out of a pool of tobacco juice and ran up the stairs, stuffing the wet paper between the blouse and the overall front.

"Did you see his hose when he bent over?" one of the girls said, almost choking with laughter. "Wonder what shade he wears? Pink Glow or Brown Haze?"

I stood there and looked at the neon flickering and the girl choking with laughter and thought I'd choke myself if I didn't get out of that basement and away from the filthy laughter. I knew I wasn't doing any good by walking out and that Beaman's didn't lose any money by my going, but it made me feel better, and maybe I was looking for an excuse to quit anyway.

By the time I'd been working at the Funeral Home for a month I'd forgotten all about Charlie, at least as far as thinking I'd ever run into him again goes. It was late one Saturday afternoon, and I was hanging around the front office reading a magazine. The other drivers had gone out of town to pick up a body, and I was on call. Mr. Sims, the man who owns the place, was sitting over his desk with a bottle, working on the Burial Association books. I'd never figured on getting hooked up with the undertaking business, but the drivers were all-right fellows, and sometimes we had a pretty good time after a job. Funerals are funny things when you're driving one of those big, eight-seater Buicks, waiting for the ceremony to get over so you can take the body to the cemetery. You watch the widow and the immediate family and the first cousins and the second cousins pass by with the choir singing "Rock of Ages," and you count the black veils and the black bands and figure out how you're going to get them all into the car without having to make two trips. Then somebody closes the casket top, and the whole congregation shudders like that was the final moment, and you remember the body lying naked downstairs in the Funeral Home with the embalming fluid going in, and you want to tell them not to feel bad because they missed the real final moment. The preacher talks about "the Resurrection Day" and makes it sound like the man's just gone to sleep, and you almost laugh out loud wondering how it'd feel to wake up some morning in Heaven with embalming fluid in your veins. I guess it would have worried me if I was thinking about dying anytime soon, and maybe that was what was wrong with Mr. Sims. He was old enough to have seen plenty of the same year's children laid out on that slab, and I guess it didn't make him feel any too good. He had started drinking early that afternoon; and by

the time Charlie came in, most of the whiskey that had been in the bottle was in Mr. Sims.

Charlie was grinning, maybe because he was happy or maybe because he didn't want anybody to think he had any complaints. He walked over to Mr. Sims with a dollar bill in his hand and bobbed his head a couple of times. "I'd like to join up with the Burial Association, please suh."

Mr. Sims looked at the overalls and the blouse and the painted fingernails. "Well, if it ain't Miss Charlie," he said, grinning at me. "You the one that lives on Jim Ledbetter's place?"

"Yes suh, that's where I stays."

"Didn't steal that dollar, did you, Charlie? That's a lot of money for a nigger to be carrying around."

"Naw suh," Charlie said, pulling at the same blue satin blouse and moving his head around like a horse when the bit's put in.

Mr. Sims was always asking the po' whites and the niggers how many chickens they'd stole that week when they came in to pay their dues. Most of them were used to it and just grinned like they appreciated the joke, but Charlie's face got dead serious, and he started to put the dollar back in his pocket. "Naw suh, I ain't stole any money. I saved so's I could be buried right when the time comes." It was like a prayer the way he said, "buried right when the time comes," and his eyes had that holy look niggers get before they die.

"Okay," Mr. Sims said and held out his hand for the dollar. "Maybe you think we let just any nigger belong to the Association?" He sounded like it was an honor to have your name down in his little black file, among those expecting someday to be dead. He'd have signed up the Devil himself if he had thought the Devil would ever be in need of burying.

Charlie slid his hands up and down the sides of his overalls. "Naw suh. I didn't mean to say anything like that."

"Well, fill this out," Mr. Sims said and handed him a card and a pencil.

Charlie turned the card over in his hand. "I cain't make letters."

"Well, give it here then." Mr. Sims jerked the card back. "I might have known. I don't know why we pay taxes for nigger schools," he said in my direction. "What's your last name?"

"Threadgill," Charlie said, watching Mr. Sims.

"Here's a good one. Man or woman?" He laughed and looked Charlie up and down.

Charlie stared back at him without saying anything.

"Well, you've got a name like a man, but I never saw any Charlie before wear a blouse and paint his fingernails. You talk sweet like a girl, and you ain't never shaved those pretty cheeks."

Charlie's face had that look boxers get crawling up from a Sunday punch. His lips started moving like in a dream when you want to scream and can't. Maybe nobody had ever come

right out and talked to him like that before. I saw him reach in his pocket, and I knew he was going for a razor, and Mr. Sims wasn't so drunk that he didn't know it too. He jerked open the desk drawer and had his pistol cocked before Charlie could get his hand curved around the blade.

Mr. Sims knew he had him. It didn't make any difference how mad Charlie got; Mr. Sims had the pistol. He was playing with Charlie, knowing he could quit playing when he wanted to and that Charlie couldn't quit because of the pistol. "I want to see you dance. I ain't never seen a nigger woman dance. Do the Charleston."

Charlie just stood there not moving, and I wondered if he was thinking "This ain't me; this is somebody else in this room" the way I was thinking it fast, trying to make out I was home in bed having a nightmare.

"Dance!" Mr. Sims said again. Charlie didn't pick up a foot. "Dance the Charleston." And Charlie stood there like a possum in the middle of the road with a car coming — black, mad stillness. "I'll give you something to dance about," Mr. Sims said out of the nightmare, and a bullet dug into the floor between Charlie's feet.

Then he danced — not a Charleston or anything else I've ever seen on a ballroom or a stage or at a nigger meeting. He just pulled his legs straight up every time the trigger clicked. His arms spread out, and the red fingernails dug into his palms. It made me think of a crazy game we used to play when we were kids. Somebody would stand at the edge of a store window and raise one leg, and leaning against the glass you saw two legs stick straight up without any support.

Mr. Sims laughed every time Charlie jumped. He laughed louder than the bullet exploding out of the barrel and digging into the floor. Then the bullets stopped and Mr. Sims pulled open his drawer and started putting in another round.

Charlie was standing there shaking. At first I thought he was going to wait and dance again. Then I saw his hand reach down into the pocket, and this time it came out with the razor. He jerked the blade open and started for Mr. Sims. His eyes were blood, and maybe he wasn't all man, but he looked like he knew which was the business end of that razor.

"Get away from me, you goddam nigger," Mr. Sims said; and I guess he didn't think just looking at the pistol would stop Charlie this time, or maybe his hand was shaking, but the bullet went right through the overalls and the satin blouse and into the brown skin. Charlie fell flat across the desk with the blood oozing into the blotter and slid to the floor.

"You saw him start for me," Mr. Sims said, still holding the pistol. "You won't forget that, will you?"

"Yeah, I saw him," I said and picked up the card out of the blood. "You want this put in the paid file?"

## ELEANOR I. JOHNSON:

## The Virtuoso

The fight in the parlor of my aunt's house between Mr. Fletcher, sexton of the First Methodist Church, and Mr. O'Reilly, foreman of the railroad shop, would never have started had Mr. O'Reilly had an ear for music. That, at least, was what Mr. Fletcher told me as I helped him apply a piece of adhesive tape over his left eye; and since I believed everything that Mr. Fletcher said, I repeated it to my uncle that night at the supper table. My uncle was unsympathetic. "An ear for music!" he grunted. "What O'Reilly needed was to be working on the day shift at the shop. Anyone trying to sleep and listen to that fool Fletcher tune a piano for three hours can't be held responsible for anything he does. I don't blame him in the least."

I fiercely resented such talk and in protest was going to leave the table without finishing my dessert, but I was afraid of my uncle, and besides, the dessert was good. What he was saying, though, was an insult to Joseph Fletcher, whose willingness to let me pull the church bell for Sunday morning service and whose manner of treating me as a responsible person named William rather than as an irresponsible child named Willie, placed him high in my regard. That he could take a piano apart, strings and all, and put it together again seemed very wonderful to me, and I revered him for his ability to sit at a piano and play on it so loudly that you could hear it a block away.

Piano tuning was Mr. Fletcher's hobby, and my aunt used to have him come regularly once a year to tune her old upright. I always spent the day at her house, and I looked forward to it for weeks ahead. The tuning process interested me, naturally, but it was Mr. Fletcher's way of putting his work to the test that I really anticipated. With the sounding board of the piano exposed, he would brace himself at the keyboard, breathe deeply two or three times, and then throw himself into "The Tornado," a piece of his own composition, written in great part for the octaves above the treble clef and below the bass and made further remarkable by the fact that the loud pedal was kept pressed to the floor throughout. Mr. Fletcher was a thin, dried-up little man with watery blue eyes and a scraggly, tobacco-stained mustache; but when he played "The Tornado," he became a formidable figure. Snorting loudly he would toss his head in time to the music and chew savagely on one end of his mustache. His free boot would keep up a steady thump, thump on the floor, a thump that grew heavier as "The Tornado" increased in violence; and for the climax he would lift himself from the piano stool, still managing to thump, and throw the whole of his meager weight into the bass chords. At intervals he would lean forward and peer intently at the bobbing hammers, and if he detected a false note he would stop in the middle of a run, grab a wrench, and tighten one of the strings. This always impressed me very much. Such antics must have lasted about five minutes altogether, and in that time Mr. Fletcher would have struck every note on the piano a minimum of twenty-seven times, by his count, and would have subjected the piano to every indignity it could conceivably suffer. Then he would sit back, mop his brow, breathe heavily for half a minute or so while the intoxicating effects of "The Tornado" wore off; and at last, smiling in grim satisfaction, he'd say, "If a piano can take that and still keep in tune, you don't need to worry about it for another year."

My aunt always dreaded "The Tornado," for it made the dishes rattle on the shelves, the dog howl, and it brought the neighbors to their windows. She always tried to get Mr. Fletcher to finish his work without subjecting the piano to the test. A resourceful woman, she once stood at his side as he finished tightening the last string, and then sat down on the stool and played "Onward Christian Soldiers" much more loudly than she ordinarily played it, exclaiming when she finished that the piano sounded very much better — perfect, in fact. She remained sitting, but the ruse didn't work, for Mr. Fletcher fidgeted about

until my aunt, smelling something burning in the kitchen, had to get up and let him take over.

It was my aunt, I suppose, who was really responsible for the fight, for she should have known better than to let Mr. Fletcher tune the piano while Mr. O'Reilly was trying to sleep. Furthermore, she should never have gone out that morning, no matter how much she wanted to avoid Mr. Fletcher's racket. Her Ladies' Aid work at the church was a poor excuse, as my uncle, who disapproved of the Ladies' Aid on general principles anyway, dourly told her. At any rate, I was the only one in the house when Mr. Fletcher arrived, and I certainly saw no reason to close the windows as he started to work.

Mr. Fletcher was accustomed to doing a thorough job, and he devoted much time and energy to each note. He would work slowly and painstakingly through an octave and then would settle himself comfortably against a leg of the piano, light his pipe, and make wise and judicious comment on the art of piano tuning or anything else that happened to be on his mind. On the day of the fight he was concerned about the manufacture of pianos. "The pianos they're making nowadays are poor weak things," he commented disgustfully as he rested after the first octave. "They're fickle as violins—get out of tune when you play them once." "Baby" pianos were becoming fashionable, and Mr. Fletcher took them as a personal affront. "Would one of them stand up under 'The Tornado'?" he asked scornfully. "No, sir! 'Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus,' properly played would break every hammer off its pin."

It was while Mr. Fletcher was at work on the second octave that the trouble started. Mr. O'Reilly had evidently succeeded in sleeping through the first, but the day was getting hot, and Mr. Fletcher was getting noisier. It was his custom to sing each note as he tuned it, and he would hit and sing each note many times. "Tum," would go the piano. "Tum," would go Mr. Fletcher. "Tum-ta-tum," would go the piano more insistently. "Tum-ta-tum," Mr. Fletcher would sing, more loudly.

On what was perhaps the A-flat of the second octave, Mr. O'Reilly made himself heard. "Fletcher!" O'Reilly shouted. "Ho! Fletcher!" "Tum!" sang Mr. Fletcher. "Mr. O'Reilly's calling you," I ventured, but Mr. Fletcher was engrossed in his work. "Tum-ta-tum!" he sang again in reedy, penetrating tones.

I moved over to the window and peeped out. Mr. O'Reilly was head and shoulders out of his bedroom window. He was red in the face and angry. "Blast it, Fletcher, I'm tryin' to sleep," he bawled, "been working the night shift—gotta get my sleep." I drew back from the window. I knew from sad experience with baseballs that Mr. O'Reilly was no man to be trifled with. He continued to shout, but Mr. Fletcher paid no heed till he finished the second octave. Then he settled back against the leg of the piano and lit his pipe.

"You said something to me, William?" he asked.

"Mr. O'Reilly's shouting at you," I replied. "He's up in the window next door."

Mr. Fletcher heaved himself up, stopped to straighten out the crick in his legs, then shuffled over to the window. He peered out. "Is that you, O'Reilly? What do you want?" he called.

Mr. O'Reilly leaned perilously far out of the window and brandished his fist. "I want you to stop that racket," he yelled. "You're makin' enough noise to raise the dead."

"Just tuning the piano," shouted Mr. Fletcher. "Don't pay any attention." And ignoring Mr. O'Reilly's further protestations, he turned away, chuckling to himself. "After the noise O'Reilly hears at the shop, it's no wonder that his ears can't appreciate the piano. It's spoiled him completely."

I took the precaution of closing the windows on Mr. O'Reilly's side of the house, and Mr. Fletcher tuned the remaining octaves in comparative peace.

By the time Mr. Fletcher had finished his work, it was very hot in the parlor. "Now we've got to submit it to the old test. We'll need a breath of fresh air for that, though." And on stiff legs he moved about the room, opening windows. I had a fleet-

ing sense of foreboding, but ignored it, so eager was I to hear "The Tornado."

I was not disappointed. Mr. Fletcher was in fine fettle, and he launched into the piece with proper violence. I've never experienced a tornado, and I doubt that Mr. Fletcher ever had either, but I'm sure that the real thing can't be much worse than his piece would have it. "The Tornado" swept on, stopped briefly while Mr. Fletcher tightened a string, and then gathered force once more. I sat rapt, completely unaware of the shouting of Mr. O'Reilly through the open windows, the ringing of the telephone, and finally the ringing of the doorbell. A pause while Mr. Fletcher tightened a string broke the spell, and I went to open the door. I fell back against the umbrella stand as Mr. O'Reilly in undershirt, pants, and slippers burst in. In no time at all, he was across the parlor and behind Mr. Fletcher, who was once more banging away at "The Tornado." With one hand Mr. O'Reilly reached down and pulled the stool out from under Mr. Fletcher, and with the other he slammed the keyboard of the piano shut. He then swung about, rested his weight on the closed keyboard and glared down at Mr. Fletcher, who sat dumbfounded on the floor and looked up at him, mouth agape.

"Now, blast it, Fletcher, you're goin' to pay for this," he muttered hoarsely. "I've been lyin' in bed for the past two hours with the window closed and listenin' to you hit every infernal note on that piano from one end to the other, and braying out each one like some lost donkey. And then when I think you're all through and I'm just about to go to sleep, you start hittin' and beatin' the piano all to pieces. Come on, now, get up and fight!" And Mr. O'Reilly sparred off, not very gracefully, for his suspenders, which were hanging down to the floor from the back of his pants, kept tripping him up.

They made a strange pair—Mr. O'Reilly, a squat fat figure, his stomach bulging over his trousers top and his suspenders getting in his way every step, and Mr. Fletcher, a wizened, spare little man, gnawing hard on one end of his mustache and prancing madly about in his shirt sleeves like some latter day Rumpelstiltskin.

Thoroughly happy and scared, I wedged myself in behind the century plant in the corner.

Mr. O'Reilly struck the first blow, a glancing right to Mr. Fletcher's chin, but Mr. Fletcher rallied and got in a good thrust at Mr. O'Reilly's protruding stomach. Mr. O'Reilly groaned and sat heavily on the floor. Mr. Fletcher, quite beside himself, danced crazily about, screaming shrilly, "Stand up and fight! Stand up and fight!" A large vase, one of my aunt's wedding gifts, rested on a pedestal near the century plant, and

it seemed in imminent danger of being knocked over. I stole out from behind the plant and carefully lifted the vase to the floor. It was none too soon, for Mr. Fletcher paid no heed to obstacles as he skipped nimbly back and forth, and he shortly knocked the pedestal over onto the century plant and me. "Give it to him! Knock him out!" I hissed as I righted the pedestal. Mr. O'Reilly was up and snorting. He charged at Mr. Fletcher, bowled him over, and the two of them tussled on the floor, knocking over the piano stool. Mr. O'Reilly's foot kept kicking the base of a large stand on top of which my aunt kept an enormous potted fern. My aunt took great pride in this fern, and I held my breath as it started to sway heavily. The large clay pot, filled with earth could easily have killed either of the two men had it fallen on their heads, but I thought only of what my aunt would say if anything happened to her fern. However, the fern and Mr. Fletcher and Mr. O'Reilly escaped, and next it was the glass door of the book case that was endangered. That, too, was spared, though; for just as they rolled close to it my aunt came bustling in. She quickly put an end to all the fun by reaching down and dragging Mr. Fletcher up onto the horsehair sofa—a thing she could easily do, for she was a large and powerful woman. Mr. O'Reilly, in a blind rage, was still rolling about the floor trying to find Mr. Fletcher, who now blinked owlishly down at him from the sofa.

"What happened, Willie?" she asked sharply.

"I don't know," I said. "Mr. Fletcher was just playing 'The Tornado' when Mr. O'Reilly came in and started to fight with him."

At the mention of "The Tornado," my aunt turned more kindly to Mr. O'Reilly. "Come, Mr. O'Reilly," she said. "You'd better wash up and go home. Help him up, Willie."

After washing his face and hands, Mr. O'Reilly left by the back door, still muttering, while my aunt was seeing Mr. Fletcher out the front. "Better go along with Mr. Fletcher, Willie," she said, turning wearily back into the house. "See that he patches up that cut on his face. If he stayed here and cleaned up, he'd want to finish playing 'The Tornado!'"

I hurried out and caught up with Mr. Fletcher and accompanied him to the basement of the church, where he somewhat absent-mindedly washed up. "No appreciation of music, William, that's what people lack today," he mused. He wiped his hands on his big red handkerchief and added, "but music has power, William, don't forget that." He chuckled, and there was malice in his old blue eyes as he looked down at me. "See how 'The Tornado' stirred up O'Reilly. There's a lot of life in that piece yet."

## PHYLLIS STARR:

### The Penny Savers

The penny savers sit, counting small things;  
On summer evenings in the dying light,  
Behind the rows of fences, face the night.  
They are quite safe, so long the town bell rings.  
The penny savers see darkened steel wings  
Pass by the white stone moon. Silent in fright  
They slouch within their houses, warm and bright.  
It is to them that dust and evil clings.  
O world! O world! you would be better rid  
Of those who are afraid to scatter leaves  
For fear to find beneath an infant tree  
A new green thing without a crusted lid;  
For fear to budge the white mayfly that weaves  
Around the moon and asks but to be free.

## ANTHONY HARRIGAN:

### Whose Island Shapes of Mind

Standing before the eagle mirror in the hall,  
I see my father's grey and famous eyes  
Stare at me from the cold shores of the glass, tall  
As the granite shaft that marks where all my family lies.

And the red hair of my Irish ancestors, who came  
Westward from chance of death in England's seas,  
Tells of the soft air of the land whose name  
Is freedom where every green heart heaves.

Seawater and ocean air made their iron spines  
And thick red hands; and on icy Newfoundland's  
Great banks they set their hooked and blazing lines  
And cursed the king that blew the fog above the sands.

And when I saw my six-foot image in the glass  
I knew how Canada's grey and rocky shore  
Had schooled my blood to love my people's cast  
Of features and their pride's great blue-veined core.

The whales that beat against the North Atlantic capes  
And thrash their tails through seawood in the brine  
Are no more wild than those whose island shapes  
Of mind, solitary and rude, the world will not let shine.

Today the ghost of Ireland rises in my thoughts  
Where the English and the famines reach  
To speak of stubborn hands my fathers brought  
From Connaught to put strong bones into their sons' new speech.

And I would honor all my country's green starved soil,  
The land in which the Giants' Causeway rears beside the sea,  
That gave, though desolation brought all the peat-bog toil,  
My grandsires' courage of St. Peter's key.

## ANTHONY HECHT:

### Natural History for Mr. Auden

See, on the lion's side,  
The twitch that is insane.  
Hiding beneath his hide  
And in his mane,  
The roach of suicide  
Bothers his brain.

Out of the burning skies  
The bird pursues its season,  
And in its rage, it flies  
Out of its reason.  
In the hot air it dies  
Of natural treason.

Dressed in his underdrawers,  
But yesterday, a chump  
Threw himself thirty floors,  
And with his jump,  
Stamped all his private sores  
Into a lump.

## To Helen

You I see through the green haze of my youth  
You who are all my dreams and all my smiles  
And in every marvel of hour's or sun's brilliance  
Your lips are signs that no daylight cry assumes.

You are among those whose lives drink from  
Beyond time's miraging moment of startled air  
Whose body is more than the white dimensions of love  
And your hands hold sunlight that no bird enchants.

You with your skylark look you charm the morning  
It is your voice out of all the riding wonders of the air  
That inspires where no child's eye gazes  
And your forever face speaks of mirrors where all love is caught.

## PAUL RAMSEY, Jr.:

### Mr. Tate

(after seeing his picture and reading  
his poems in *New Poems 1943*)

Tough time ridiculed his stance,  
His troubled mouth, his gleaming eyes  
That looked on mosses' swift advance  
And watched for sharper fantasies.

So many colts had run away  
To pull the wheels of war's tall coach!  
The lean manes in the wind's long play,  
Remembered, solemn as a leech.

And heard the hound slink to the door  
No Mediterranean conquered yet,  
But the sound failed to reach the roar  
UnChristed oceans wrapped about.

And assumed a more deliberate guise  
And wrote the words at which we gaze,  
Our unquit crimes amaze.

## Sonnet

The foreign hours then, and in the wake  
Of whitest foam and bluest spume of sea  
By night we kept the watch and could not shake  
The twin dark hands of fear and memory.

And moon that other lands had too seen curve  
As high, as big, but rich with lovers' deeds  
Was now a match to touch along a nerve  
Of tensing fear, and light torpedo needs.

But here return and fierce impact of home  
Sets worlds awhirl, and then will bring them down  
And focus them; in rose bowl all of foam,  
And all of battle's being in a frown.

And Now, like a clock hand, winds the year,  
With distance doomed to nowhere: all is here.

## DON JUSTICE:

### Ode at Christmas Eve in Time of War

(A)

Now while the holy season clumsily stalks toward us  
Like a bear, through the smoke-screen of snow  
The clank of brother Marley's chains, nailed to the season's feet,  
Echoes so loudly, even I, who know such things can not,  
Imagine that I hear it, like the groan of unheard cannon,  
Swinging into range. Upon the burning holly-bush  
Drops of blood shaped rather like red rud-checked berries  
Remind me of the blue blood shed by that long-dead fanatic,  
Hero of a famous myth, who rises like the wise man's star  
Each year in this cold-shouldered month.  
And through cacophony of drunken celebrating auto horns  
Breaks for the thousandth time the carolling of shepherds,  
Offkey perhaps, but Peace on Earth, Good Will to All  
The long troop of dead like angels gesturing here,  
Their obscene sermon frozen forever in the December air.

(B)

Now while the holy season clumsily stalks toward us  
Like a bear, through the smoke-screen of snow,  
The chime of Marley's chains, nailed to the season's feet,  
Rings out with such loud melody that even I  
Imagine that I hear it, dragged through some basement  
Of my ear; and on this sprig of holly  
Drops of blood spilled rather like red berries  
Remind me of the blue blood shed  
By that long-dead fanatic, hero of a famous myth,  
Who rises like the wise man's star  
Each year in this cold-shouldered month.

But over the music of these drunken horns  
Ascends, and hangs in a more silent kind of air,  
The carolling of shepherds, offkey perhaps,  
But Peace on Earth, Good Will to All  
The long troop of dead like angels gesturing here,  
Their obscene sermon frozen forever in our December air.

## The Fall

(A)

We two who took time out to walk in a wood  
Raced in as slow a motion as we could;  
But bodies, brushed like two dry sticks together  
Crackled a fire that caught on the autumn weather,  
That crisped the paper-edges of the fall  
Weather;  
Who would leave time must first with love unleaf it,  
And shinny up the tall bare shivering tree,  
Out on a limb, until time bend and sway  
And crack beneath him: so lovers fall like angels,  
And parachuting down, down all in tangles,  
Fall into love, and splash there, kids in a pool  
Gone wading, though all the blasted lake's aboil.

(B)

We two who took time out to walk in a wood  
Raced in as slow a motion as we could,  
Till bodies, brushing like two dry sticks together,  
Crackled a fire that caught on the autumn weather;  
We broke apart and ran, and ran amuck,  
And all our time went up in so much smoke.  
Who would leave time must first unleaf it, climb  
High up the shivering tree, out on a limb  
And feel time bend and buckle and crack with the weight;  
With two together, time itself might split.  
So we may yet fall mightily like angels,  
And parachuting down, down all in tangles,  
Fall into love and splash there, kids in a pool  
Gone wading, though all the blasted lake's aboil.

## ELEANOR I. JOHNSON:

### Planned Life

Let them look to their budgets, the careful livers,  
Counting the coin, the hour, the lump of sugar,  
The cup of coffee, and the glass of milk,  
Measuring, planning, taking  
For jig-saw puzzle the crazy quilt of Life,  
Fitting the pieces in a neat design,  
Rationing sleep, and forcing love  
To punch a time clock,  
Harnessing the heart's blood, each corpuscle  
To be accounted for, rendering unto order  
The things that are not order's, insulating  
The treacherous nerves, fire-proofing the mind,  
Starving the soul.

You say that you are thinking of the future,  
But in a thousand or a hundred years  
What will have happened to the ten or twenty  
Your astigmatic foresight earned as dividend  
On stock of life unlived, time thriftily wasted?  
Unshrewd investment for a careful man.

### Sorrow

Sorrow is the only faithful one:  
The lone companion clinging like a season  
To its original skin no matter how the variations.

If all the mountains paraded  
Eating the valleys as they went  
And the sun were a coiffure on the highest peak,

Sorrow would be there between  
The sparkling and the giant laughter  
Of the enemy when the clouds come down to swim.

But I am less unmagical, black  
Sorrow clings to me more than to doomsday mountains  
Or erosion scars on a palisade.

Sorrow has a song like a leech  
Crying because the sand's blood is dry  
And the stars reflected in the lake

Are water for all their twinkling  
And bloodless for all their charm.  
I have blood and a song:

Sorrow is the only faithful one.

JOHN O. ENDERS, II:

**A Season in Hell (Modern)**

Down around the lower circle where the last summer hunger of late September stands thick in the streets and behind every green-striped, folded awning hangs the spectre of autumn, there are a series of two-family, frame houses. Most of them are yellow, with the inevitable automobile drawn up in front and grimy dots of children forgotten upon the parched surfaces of many tight, brown lawns. A furious network of trellis and dismal, American baroque produce a crusty artificiality. Stucco and green-trimmed gables, a desperate view of weary alleys captioned at the corners by chunky hydrants, the warm, sooty envelopment of incinerators and one bell sounding time above the trees. This is the lower circle where a dog barks in some frail, afternoon doorway, where thumbs and fingers of nervous wind scrawl evening upon a deep, loam-surface of mottled sky. If someone were to close a door it would be down around the lower circle.

Thus it was, that in her attic studio, situated in the top of one of the two-family frame houses in the lower circle, she was often apt to crown her latest, desperate achievement with a sombre frieze of starlings. The birds glued themselves onto a section of telegraph wire just beyond the studio window, and she had only to transpose her drawings to plaster. However, this woman was so large and so fundamentally fat that the world seemed to come to her mostly in cylindrical forms or quaint, terse epigrams. The latter went into her dealings with her husband, the cylinders into her sculpture. This sedentary process of shifting natural objects into fantastic semi-reality, coupled with her flaccid contempt for form, disposed any possible admirers against her and caused those oversized hands to shake with vehemence. Nothing clever could possibly emanate from those oversized hands. Her direct contact with life itself was walled up in mounds of flesh, and the color which was blue, faint blue, terrified her down to the last fibre, producing a certain shivering of the flesh. It was always this escape from blue. An occasional frieze of starlings over one naked child but that was all. The escape from blue, faint blue, and a fabulous frieze of starlings; while in the long winter of her voluminous flesh, floundered watery concept of the glittering world beyond.

Her husband, an intense, wan-lipped businessman, pecked at his family duties with a thin, corvine apprehension. Dim lights were frozen across his countenance and there was that searching in the pockets for objects misplaced, that frenzied quest after lost material, that high-pitched paperchase in a dead wind. His fingers and indeed, his whole frame, seemed to be in a ceaseless process of fumbling activity, while something of the finality of the grave had worn itself into his faraway eyes. Whenever she was at work, driven by the threat of stagnation or enflamed by her peculiar anger, he was wont to hover about her; loose arms alive with vague gesture; his stumbling speech full of half-remonstrance, semi-approval and nebulous praise. The phantom of his sustained presence cut into her soft creations like the shrewd instrument which it was. Every art object and innocent plaster child reflected this incisive entrance. Throughout her spacious half-awareness she felt it herself. It was an instant shock as if some trap had sprung, deep in her pale, muddled plasma of consciousness. A hornet was drilling on cold glass inside a structure of awkward shadows. She was confused. He, in turn, only watched her shudder slightly with clay clinging to her hands, caked under her fingernails. He watched her moulding a frieze of starlings, a tawny knot of naked children. And again she felt his presence; crying hollow roses in a brassy eye.

But today, there was really something to justify his presence. He seemed to be there because worlds had fallen lax at their tag-ends. No trace remained of the disaster, but nevertheless, he was there with a vengeance of eddying smoke wreaths hurrying over his forehead and a rotten clay pipe clenched between the twin, fine lines of his mouth. In a far corner, behind a

sculptured filigree of limb and small gesture, his distant eyes solid, he waited, poised over a tiny cane chair. She continued to weave about among her pendulous creations, observing each with a sly smile and nod of appreciation. She allowed her heavy fingers to play over certain familiar planes, slowly, with a calculated ease. She had drawn the shades and only an indirect illumination filtered through from an overhead skylight. But still the bolder shadows were blue where they adhered to various declivities and quick corners. He was there in one corner with blue smoke winding back over his forehead, sealed away in the tug and languor of faint blue which stuck onto his clothes, his slick, drawn profile, and was one with his acute discomfort.

She began to work uneasily. The plaster which had already been moulded to his general proportions came clumsily now and she found it increasingly difficult to bring it under her will. His bust was mounted in the center of the room directly beneath the skylight, and the forehead and upper expanse of skull reflected a clear, white light. But that light died upon contact, creating an opaque quality of spent brilliance. The dim lights which were frozen across his actual countenance had lit upon the unfinished replica lending it a forbidden animation. Somehow she felt that she had been wronged. He only squirmed in his tiny cane chair. Both sensed the tension mounting. Both sensed this tension with its haunting implications and hint of eventual verdict. Appearing as it did, before them, spare, illusive, each owned a sudden share of the other's destiny. Could it be reduced to a mere struggle for ascendancy with all those faint, blue lights crowding back an initial white promise; her promise? Could it be that in darkness there is no need for climax? Of could it only be a solitary, blue hornet drilling on cold glass?

But she began to handle the plaster more confidently now. His being there had gradually sobered her to the task at hand and she felt assured in the recurrence of long forgotten skill. Moreover, a flicker of power had even succeeded in driving her toward completion and, aroused by contempt for her former ways, she had soon redefined the gaunt cheekbones and sawdust delineations of flesh. He spoke gently to her with careful selections of praise which might almost have been torn out of context, so complete were they in their intended detachment. But nothing external could possibly thwart her. A new grace infused her heavy body and, in place of previously stunted gestures, appeared an airy complacency which dealt with form and construction in bright, close harmonies. She was in that sheltered vale again where hands and dancers swirled anew, where the irrelevant cause was forgotten for the fleeting moment and where acacia and marigold bloomed on toward a never approaching harvest. She felt increased capability for an effective winnowing of resource, a fresh appetite for mental juxtaposition and, above all, she knew that her dreadful blue, faint blue had slipped and vanished, that in its place pure white shone through; the last bond had dropped and she was free.

He continued to watch her musingly, moving his head in response to her sharp demands and stirring from side to side on the cane chair. His clay pipe had burnt out but its cracked bowl still twitched convulsively under a tenuous grip. He immediately noticed that she had become aroused with this new alacrity but he only smiled to himself, feeling spuriously remote from her presence, yet at the same time pricked by something which was not exactly of her but which, in refined essence, cursed at the part of her he had known to become identified with himself over a period of years. He was loath to admit actual hatred. Nor was contempt in any manner connected with a certain aura of decay constantly shrouding his mind like a liquid opiate and indubitably caused by her tragic actuality. But she was not to be interrupted now. Working feverishly, scarce heeding his frequent half-glances in her direction, she made ample use of her weird exuberance. The force which was consuming her caused beads of perspiration to stand out on her glistening arms and ponderous features. She became enthused with a gross hilarity. She became a jangling chain of excite-

ment. She had reached successive stages of accomplishment over the narrow progression of her abilities, but none had been comparable to this fresh outburst. The color blue, faint blue which previously had drifted back like a fragile song and had wrought such havoc in her inestimable soul, had finally become reinstated with the discarded skein of her outgrown passion. She became mobile.

And today, at the exact instant when summer finally stood in hungry flight against the sky and every two-family frame house shone with a sulphurous opalescence, her plaster replica, hung as well in this eerie light of failing definition, became, for an instant, clarified. A deft antithesis of effect, this clash of spent light upon sharp surface, gave birth to reality. She had finished his bust in much the same manner as she had begun. But in the process, she had come to realize herself through a medium long clumsy and inadequate to her. Today came success and white light around the lower circle. Veiled in the waning dusk, each house emerged through the gloom, an intri-

cate lacework of tone and substance. The veined, marble fountain buried in a fold of gnarled oak root bespoke a luxury of ease. The back-fence citadels of smug, suburban banality disappeared under a blanket of mystic fulfillment. She had finished the statue.

It remained beneath a canvas tarpaulin during the next week which she devoted to daily visits to the studio, viewing the likeness, scraping away loose particles of clay and moving it about on its pedestal. Her husband seemed to share her feeling of content. But he still watched her with his faraway eyes.

On the last day of the week, the week during which she had collected her scattered sensations and had begun to assimilate their true worth, he had left on a business trip. His going relieved her considerably. After driving him to the station, she had returned exuberantly in the first morning light to the statue. An empty bottle lay beside the pedestal. Upon the forehead, eyes and sallow plaster cheeks had been smeared, in finger-strokes which were still wet, a thin, blue dye.

## MACTAVISH REDDING:

### Lenna

Well, of course she died some time ago; so I've really no right to complain—only for the nightmares. She had no right to leave me the nightmares after everything else; and I resent it.

Naturally there's nothing I had rather do than wring her neck, but that is a bit impossible. Having done the job quite thoroughly once, I could hardly hope to enjoy the experience again. As a matter of fact, I'm not at all sure it would be enjoyable a second time. No, considering her present state, it would be most distasteful.

And that, by the way, Gentlemen, is one of the things which bothers me. Always, in my dreams I am conscious of dead flesh, flesh that is yellowish-grey with decomposition; but whether it is Lenna's, or mine, or somebody else's—that is what worries me. Dead flesh in itself is not such an appalling thing. Only when the stuff is always lying about it has to belong to somebody, and that's distracting. At any rate, I find it so. That's why I complain.

Obviously it is a just complaint, but what is one to do? Besides, that statement I made just now was a gross falsification. I never killed Lenna; she beat me to it, and that's why I didn't! Gentlemen, that's why! And you can see for yourselves the utter injustice of the torment which has been imposed upon me by this creature.

Yet I swear to you, never did I do anything to provoke such action on her part. It was entirely self-motivated; her pre-daceous nature forced her to rend to shreds all my innermost reflections revealed to her in my weaker moments—those moments when we bury our heads with tears and laments in the bosom of the nearest available female, expounding our self-pity and the degradation of the night. And she, foul beast that she certainly was, listened to and remembered all. One would expect a decent being to forget such things. But no. Not Lenna.

We would be drinking tea in my upstairs apartment (I often entertained her there); I would make a casual statement con-

cerning the nuisance of rats or the difficulties of plumbing in Paris since the War, or some such thing, and she, quite suddenly, apropos of nothing, would begin a long spiel of grief apparently quoted from something I had said the night before, a month before, or God knows when.

These dissertations were made with slightly tilted head, the expression being one of wild-eyed blankness. I could always tell when she was ready to begin her recitation by her lighting a cigarette. I hate women who smoke! When men smoke, they do so because it is a habit; women smoke purely for effect, I'm convinced.

For instance, if she was in a really vile mood, she would languidly raise her hand to her lips (her lips were quite pretty, and she was capable of doing extremely odd things with them) and engulf huge quantities of smoke until I was sure her lungs must resemble London on a foggy night. Then, emitting venomous darts of smoke that seemed to disperse into poisonous vapors of intention, she would strike a pose, flicking the ashes from her cigarette as though in preparation for the kill. Consequently, by the time she began to speak I was completely unnerved.

Gentlemen, it is impossible for you to imagine how the woman looked on such occasions. I say it is impossible from experience. I know, because I have been trying to picture her in my mind. And as you see, I failed.

Frankly, I do not care whether you see her or not. I contend that she was horrible and that should suffice. But enough! Gentlemen, I am sick of you. Get out. And if you wonder at my illness . . . ! No, of course you do not wonder; therefore, you must hear me. Very well, stay a while then.

I am sick because you are the products of an overactive imagination. You are the outgrowth of ennui, Gentlemen, utter ennui. I employed you merely because you are the only ones to whom I could relate these past experiences.

What? You think me mad for pondering on such gruelling recollections? Consider, Gentlemen, had you such a painful memory as Lenna, would you not also attempt to quiet the whine of boredom by the very stimulus of its pain?

## FLANNERY O'CONNOR:

### The Geranium\*

Old Dudley folded into the chair he was gradually molding to his own shape and looked out the window fifteen feet away into another window framed by blackened red brick. He was waiting for the geranium. They put it out every morning about ten and they took it in at five-thirty. Mrs. Carson back home had a geranium in her window. There were plenty of geraniums at home, better looking geraniums. Ours are sho nuff geraniums, Old Dudley thought, not any er this pale pink business with green, paper bows. The geranium they would put in the window reminded him of the Grisby boy at home who had polio and had to be wheeled out every morning and left in the sun to blink. Lutisha could have taken that geranium and stuck it in the ground and had something worth looking at in a few weeks. Those people across the alley had no business with one. They set it out and let the hot sun bake it all day and they put it so near the ledge the wind could almost knock it over. They had no business with it, no business with it. It shouldn't have been there. Old Dudley felt his throat knotting up. Lutish could root anything. Rabie too. His throat was drawn taut. He laid his head back and tried to clear his mind. There wasn't much he could think of to think about that didn't do his throat that way.

His daughter came in. "Don't you want to go out for a walk?" she asked. She looked provoked.

He didn't answer her.

"Well?"

"No." He wondered how long she was going to stand there. She made his eyes feel like his throat. They'd get watery and she'd see. She had seen before and had looked sorry for him. She'd looked sorry for herself too; but she could er saved herself, Old Dudley thought, if she'd just have let him alone—let him stay where he was back home and not be so taken up with her damn duty. She moved out of the room leaving an audible sigh to crawl over him and remind him again of that one minute—that wasn't her fault at all—when suddenly he had wanted to go to New York to live with her.

He could have got out of going. He could have been stubborn and told her he'd spend his life where he'd always spent it, send him or not send him the money every month, he'd get along with his pension and odd jobs. Keep her damn money—she needed it worse than he did. She would have been glad to have had her duty disposed of like that. Then she could have said if he died without his children near him, it was his own fault; if he got sick and there wasn't anybody to take care of him, well, he'd asked for it, she could have said. But there was that thing inside him that had wanted to see New York. He had been to Atlanta once when he was a boy and he had seen New York in a picture show. "Big Town Rhythm" it was. Big towns were important places. The thing inside him had sneaked up on him for just one instant. The place like he'd seen in the picture show had room for him! It was an important place and it had room for him! He'd said, yes, he'd go.

He must have been sick when he said it. He couldn't have been well and said it. He had been sick and she had been so taken up with her damn duty, she had wangled it out of him. Why did she have to come down there in the first place to pester him? He had been doing all right. There was his pension that could feed him and odd jobs that kept him his room in the boarding house.

The window in that room showed him the river—thick and red as it struggled over rocks and around curves. He tried to think how it was besides red and slow. He added green blotches for trees on either side of it and a brown spot for trash somewhere upstream. He and Rabie had fished it in a flat-bottom boat every Wednesday. Rabie knew the river up and down for

twenty miles. There wasn't another nigger in Coa County that knew it like he did. He loved the river, but it hadn't meant anything to Old Dudley. The fish were what he was after. He liked to come in at night with a long string of them and slap them down in the sink. "Few fish I got," he'd say. It took a man to get those fish, the old girls at the boarding house always said. He and Rabie would start out early Wednesday morning and fish all day. Rabie would find the spots and row; Old Dudley always caught them. Rabie didn't care much about catching them—he just loved the river. "Ain't no use settin' yo' line down dere, boss," he'd say, "ain't no fish dere. Dis old riber ain't hidin' none nowhere 'round hyar, nawsu," and he would giggle and shift the boat downstream. That was Rabie. He could steal cleaner than a weasel but he knew where the fish were. Old Dudley always gave him the little ones.

Old Dudley had lived upstairs in the corner room of the boarding house ever since his wife died in '22. He protected the old ladies. He was the man in the house and he did the things a man in the house was supposed to do. It was a dull occupation at night when the old girls crabbed and crocheted in the parlor and the man in the house had to listen and judge the sparrow-like wars that rasped and twittered intermittently. But in the daytime there was Rabie. Rabie and Lutisha lived down in the basement. Lutish cooked and Rabie took care of the cleaning and the vegetable garden; but he was sharp at sneaking off with half his work done and going to help Old Dudley with some current project—building a hen house or painting a door. He liked to listen, he liked to hear about Atlanta when Old Dudley had been there and about how guns were put together on the inside and all the other things the old man knew.

Sometimes at night they would go 'possum hunting. They never got a 'possum but Old Dudley liked to get away from the ladies once in a while and hunting was a good excuse. Rabie didn't like 'possum hunting. They never got a 'possum; they never even treed one; and besides, he was mostly a water nigger. "We ain't gonna go huntin' no 'possum tonight, is we, boss? I got a lil' business I wants tuh tend tuh," he'd say when Old Dudley would start talking about hounds and guns. "Whose chickens you gonna steal tonight?" Dudley would grin. "I reckon I be huntin' 'possum tonight," Rabie'd sigh.

Old Dudley would get out his gun and take it apart and, as Rabie cleaned the pieces, would explain the mechanism to him. Then he'd put it together again. Rabie always marveled at the way he could put it together again. Old Dudley would like to have explained New York to Rabie. If he could have showed it to Rabie, it wouldn't have been so big—he wouldn't have felt pressed down every time he went out in it. "It ain't so big," he would have said. "Don't let it get you down, Rabie. It's just like any other city and cities ain't all that complicated."

But they were. New York was swishing and jamming one minute and dirty and dead the next. His daughter didn't even live in a house. She lived in a building—the middle in a row of buildings all alike, all blackened—red and gray with rasp-mouthed people hanging out their windows looking at other windows and other people just like them looking back. Inside you could go up and you could go down and there were just halls that reminded you of tape measures strung out with a door every inch. He remembered he'd been dazed by the building the first week. He'd wake up expecting the halls to have changed in the night and he'd look out the door and there they stretched like dog runs. The streets were the same way. He wondered where he'd be if he walked to the end of one of them. One night he dreamed he did and ended at the end of the building—nowhere.

The next week he had become more conscious of the daughter and son-in-law and their boy—no place to be out of their way. The son-in-law was a queer one. He drove a truck and came in only on the weekends. He said "Nah" for "No" and he'd never heard of a 'possum. Old Dudley slept in the room with the boy who was sixteen and couldn't be talked to. But sometimes when

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the daughter and Old Dudley were alone in the apartment, she would sit down and talk to him. First she had to think of something to say. Usually it gave out before what she considered was the proper time to get up and do something else, so he would have to say something. He always tried to think of something he hadn't said before. She never listened the second time. She was seeing that her father spent his last years with his own family and not in a decayed boarding house full of old women whose heads jiggled. She was doing her duty. She had brothers and sisters who were not.

Once she took him shopping with her but he was too slow. They went in a "subway"—a railroad underneath the ground like in a big cave. People boiled out of trains and up steps and over into the streets. They rolled off the street and down steps and into trains—black and white and yellow all mixed up like vegetables in soup. Everything was boiling. The trains swished in from tunnels, up canals, and all of a sudden stopped. The people coming out pushed through the people coming in and a noise rang and the train swooped off again. Old Dudley and the daughter had to go in three different ones before they got where they were going. He wondered why people ever went out of their houses. He felt like his tongue had slipped down in his stomach. She held him by the coat sleeve and pulled him through the people.

They went on an overhead train too. She called it an "El." They had to go up on a high platform to catch it. Old Dudley looked over the rail and could see the people rushing and the automobiles rushing under him. He felt sick. He put one hand on the rail and sank down on the wooden floor of the platform. The daughter screamed and pulled him over from the edge. "Do you want to fall off and kill yourself?" she shouted.

Through a crack in the board he could see the cars swimming in the street. "I don't care," he murmured, "I don't care if I do or not."

"Come on," she said, "you'll feel better when we get home."

"Home?" he repeated. The cars moved in a rhythm below him.

"Come on," she said, "here it comes; we've just got time to make it." They'd just had time to make all of them.

They made that one. They came back to the building and the apartment. The apartment was too tight. There was no place to be where there wasn't somebody else. The kitchen opened into the bathroom and the bathroom opened into everything else and you were always where you started from. At home there was upstairs and the basement and the river and down town in front of Fraziers . . . damn his throat.

The geranium was late today. It was ten-thirty. They usually had it out by ten-fifteen.

Somewhere down the hall a woman shrilled something unintelligible out to the street; a radio was bleating the worn music to a soap serial; and a garbage can crashed down a fire escape. The door to the next apartment slammed and a sharp footstep clipped down the hall. "That would be the nigger," Old Dudley muttered. "The nigger with the shiny shoes." He had been there a week when the nigger moved in. That Thursday he was looking out the door at the dog run halls when this nigger went into the next apartment. He had on a grey, pin-stripe suit and a tan tie. His collar was stiff and white and made a clear-cut line next to his neck. His shoes were shiny tan—they matched his tie and his skin. Old Dudley scratched his head. He hadn't known the kind of people that would live thick in a building could afford servants. He chuckled. Lot of good a nigger in a Sunday suit would do them. Maybe this nigger would know the country around here—maybe how to get to it. They might could hunt. They might could find them a stream somewhere. He shut the door and went to his daughter's room. "Hey!" he shouted, "the folks next door got 'em a nigger. Must be gonna clean for them. You reckon they gonna keep him every day?"

She looked up from making the bed. "What are you talking about?"

"I say they got 'em a servant next door—a nigger—all dressed up in a Sunday suit."

She walked to the other side of the bed. "You must be crazy," she said. "The next apartment is vacant, and besides, nobody around here can afford any servant."

"I tell you I saw him," Old Dudley snickered. "Going right in there with a tie and a white collar on—and sharp-toed shoes."

"If he went in there, he's looking at it for himself," she muttered. She went to the dresser and started fidgeting with things.

Old Dudley laughed. She could be right funny when she wanted to. "Well," he said, "I think I'll go over and see what day he gets off. Maybe I can convince him he likes to fish," and he'd slapped his pocket to make the two quarters jingle. Before he got out in the hall good, she came tearing behind him and pulled him in. "Can't you hear?" she'd yelled. "I meant what I said. He's renting that himself if he went in there. Don't you go asking him any questions or saying anything to him. I don't want any trouble with niggers."

"You mean," Old Dudley murmured, "he's gonna live next door to you?"

She shrugged. "I suppose he is. And you tend to your own business," she added. "Don't have anything to do with him."

That's just the way she'd said it. Like he didn't have any sense at all. But he'd told her off then. He'd stated his say and she knew what he meant. "You ain't been raised that way!" he'd said thundery-like. "You ain't been raised to live tight with niggers that think they're just as good as you, and you think I'd go messin' around with one or that kind! If you think I want anything to do with them, you're crazy." He had had to slow down then because his throat was tightening. She'd stood stiff up and said they lived where they could afford to live and made the best of it. Preaching to him! Then she'd walked stiff off without a word more. That was her. Trying to be holy with her shoulders curved around and her neck in the air. Like he was a fool. He knew yankees let niggers in their front doors and let them sit on their sofas but he didn't know his own daughter that was raised proper would stay next door to them—and then think he didn't have no more sense than to want to mix with them. Him!

He got up and took a paper off another chair. He might as well appear to be reading when she came through again. No use having her standing there staring at him, believing she had to think up something for him to do. He looked over the paper at the window across the alley. The geranium wasn't there yet. It had never been this late before. The first day he'd seen it, he had been sitting there looking out the window at the other window and he had looked at his watch to see how long it had been since breakfast. When he looked up, it was there. It startled him. He didn't like flowers, but the geranium didn't look like a flower. It looked like the sick Grisby boy at home and it was the color of the drapes the old ladies had in the parlor and the paper bow on it looked like the one behind Lutish's uniform she wore on Sundays. Lutish had a fondness for sashes. Most niggers did, Old Dudley thought.

The daughter came through again. He had meant to be looking at the paper when she came through. "Do me a favor, will you?" she asked as if she had just thought up a favor he could do.

He hoped she didn't want him to go to the grocery again. He got lost the time before. All the blooming buildings looked alike. He nodded.

"Go down to the third floor and ask Mrs. Schmitt to lend me the shirt pattern she uses for Jake."

Why couldn't she just let him sit? She didn't need the shirt pattern. "All right," he said, "What number is it?"

"Number 10—just like this. Right below us three floors down."

Old Dudley was always afraid that when he went out in the dog runs, a door would suddenly open and one of the snipe-nosed men that hung off the window ledges in their undershirts would growl, "What are you doing here?" The door to the nigger's apartment was open and he could see a woman sitting in a chair by the window. "Yankee niggers,"

he muttered. She had on rimless glasses and there was a book in her lap. Niggers don't think they're dressed up till they get on glasses, Old Dudley thought. He remembered Lutish's glasses. She had saved up thirteen dollars to buy them. Then she went to the doctor and asked him to look at her eyes and tell her how thick to get the glasses. He made her look at animals' pictures through a mirror and he stuck a light through her eyes and looked in her head. Then he said she didn't need any glasses. She was so mad she burned the cornbread three days in a row, but she bought her some glasses anyway at the ten-cent store. They didn't cost her but \$1.98 and she wore them every Saddey. "That was niggers," Old Dudley chuckled. He realized he had made a noise, and covered his mouth with his hand. Somebody might hear him in one of the apartments.

He turned down the first flight of stairs. Down the second he heard footsteps coming up. He looked over the banisters and saw it was a woman—a fat woman with an apron on. From the top, she looked kind er like Mrs. Benson at home. He wondered if she would speak to him. When they were four steps from each other, he darted a glance at her but she wasn't looking at him. When there were no steps between them, his eyes fluttered up for an instant and she was looking at him cold in the face. Then she was past him. She hadn't said a word. He felt heavy in his stomach.

He went down four flights instead of three. Then he went back up one and found number 10. Mrs. Schmitt said O.K., wait a minute and she'd get the pattern. She sent one of the children back to the door with it. The child didn't say anything.

Old Dudley started back up the stairs. He had to take it more slowly. It tired him going up. Everything tired him, looked like. Not like having Rabie to do his running for him. Rabie was a light-footed nigger. He could sneak in a hen-house 'thout even the hens knowing it and get him the fattest fryer in there and not a squawk. Fast too. Dudley had always been slow on his feet. It went that way with fat people. He remembered one time him and Rabie was hunting quail over near Molton. They had 'em a hound dog that could find a covey quickern any fancy pointer going. He wasn't no good at bringing them back but he could find them every time and then set like a dead stump while you aimed at the birds. This one time the hound stopped cold-still. "Dat gonna be a big 'un," Rabie whispered, "I feels it." Old Dudley raised the gun slowly as he walked along. He had to be careful of the pine needles. They covered the ground and made it slick. Rabie shifted his weight from side to side, lifting and setting his feet on the waxen needles with unconscious care. He looked straight ahead and moved forward swiftly. Old Dudley kept one eye ahead and one on the ground. It would slope and he would be sliding forward dangerously or in pulling himself up an incline, he would slide back down.

"Ain't I better get dem birds dis time, boss?" Rabie suggested. "You ain't never easy on yo' feets on Monday. If you falls in one dem slopes, you gonna scatter dem birds fo' you gets dat gun up."

Old Dudley wanted to get the covey. He could er knocked four out it easy. "I'll get 'em," he muttered. He lifted the gun to his eye and leaned forward. Something slipped beneath him and he slid backward on his heels. The gun went off and the covey sprayed into the air.

"Dem was some mighty fine birds we let get away from us," Rabie sighed.

"We'll find another covey," Old Dudley said, "now get me out of this damn hole."

He could er got five er those birds if he hadn't fallen. He could er shot 'em off like cans on a fence. He drew one hand back to his ear and extended the other forward. He could er knocked 'em out like clay pigeons. Bang! A squeak on the staircase made him wheel around—his arms still holding the invisible gun. The nigger was clipping up the steps toward him, an amused smile stretching his trimmed mustache. Old Dudley's mouth dropped open. The nigger's lips were pulled

down like he was trying to keep from laughing. Old Dudley couldn't move. He stared at the clear-cut line the nigger's collar made against his skin.

"What are you hunting, old timer?" the negro asked in a voice that sounded like a nigger's laugh and a white man's sneer.

Old Dudley felt like a child with a pop-pistol. His mouth was open and his tongue was rigid in the middle of it. Right below his knees felt hollow. His feet slipped and he slid three steps and landed sitting down.

"You better be careful," the negro said. "You could easily hurt yourself on these steps," and he held out his hand for Old Dudley to pull up on. It was a long narrow hand and the tips of the fingernails were clean and cut squarely. They looked like they might have been filed. Old Dudley's hands hung between his knees. The nigger took him by the arm and pulled up. "Whew!" he gasped, "you're heavy. Give a little help here." Old Dudley's knees unbended and he staggered up. The nigger had him by the arm. "I'm going up anyway," he said. "I'll help you." Old Dudley looked frantically around. The steps behind him seemed to close up. He was walking with the nigger up the stairs. The nigger was waiting for him on each step. "So you hunt?" the nigger was saying. "Well, let's see. I went deer hunting once. I believe we used a Dodson 38 to get those deer. What do you use?"

Old Dudley was staring through the shiny tan shoes. "I use a gun," he mumbled.

"I like to fool with guns better than hunting," the nigger was saying. "Never was much at killing anything. Seems kind of a shame to deplete the game reserve. I'd collect guns if I had the time and the money, though." He was waiting on every step till Old Dudley got on it. He was explaining guns and makes. He had on grey socks with a black fleck in them. They finished the stairs. The nigger walked down the hall with him, holding him by the arm. It probably looked like he had his arm locked in the nigger's.

They went right up to Old Dudley's door. Then the nigger asked, "You from around here?"

Old Dudley shook his head looking at the door. He hadn't looked at the nigger yet. All the way up the stairs, he hadn't looked at the nigger. "Well," the nigger said, "it's a swell place—once you get used to it." He patted Old Dudley on the back and went into his own apartment. Old Dudley went into his. The pain in his throat was all over his face now, leaking out his eyes.

He shuffled to the chair by the window and sank down in it. His throat was going to pop. His throat was going to pop on account of a nigger—a damn nigger that patted him on the back and called him "old timer." Him that knew such as that couldn't be. Him that had come from a good place. A good place. A place where such as that couldn't be. His eyes felt strange in their sockets. They were swelling in them and in a minute there wouldn't be any room left for them. He was trapped in this place where niggers could call you "old timer." He wouldn't be trapped. He wouldn't be. He rolled his head on the back of the chair to stretch his neck that was too full.

A man was looking at him. A man was in the window across the alley looking straight at him. The man was watching him cry. That was where the geranium was supposed to be and it was a man in his undershirt, watching him cry, wanting to watch his throat pop. Old Dudley looked back at the man. It was supposed to be the geranium. The geranium belonged there, not the man. "Where is the geranium?" he called out of his tight throat.

"What you cryin' for?" the man asked. "I ain't never seen a man cry like that."

"Where is the geranium?" Old Dudley quavered. "It ought to be there. Not you."

"This is my window," the main said. "I got a right to set here if I want to."

"Where is it?" Old Dudley shrieked. There was just a little room left in his throat.

"It fell off if it's any of your business," the man said.

Old Dudley got up and peered over the window ledge. Down in the alley, way six floors down, he could see a cracked flower pot scattered over a spray of dirt and something pink sticking out of a green paper bow. It was down six floors. Smashed down six floors.

Old Dudley looked at the man who was chewing gum and waiting to see the throat pop. "You shouldn't have put it so near the ledge," he murmured. "Why don't you pick it up?"

"Why don't you, pop?"

Old Dudley stared at the man who was where the geranium should have been.

He would. He'd go down and pick it up. He'd put it in his own window and look at it all day if he wanted to. He turned from the window and left the room. He walked slowly down the dog run and got to the steps. The steps dropped down like a deep wound in the floor. They opened up through a gap like a cavern and went down and down. And he had gone up them a little behind the nigger. And the nigger had pulled him up on his feet and kept his arm in his and gone up the steps

with him and said he hunted deer, "old timer," and seen him holding a gun that wasn't there and sitting on the steps like a child. He had shiny tan shoes and he was trying not to laugh and the whole business was laughing. There'd probably be niggers with black flecks in their socks on every step, pulling down their mouths so as not to laugh. The steps dropped down and down. He wouldn't go on those steps. He wouldn't go on them again. He wouldn't go down and have niggers patten' him on the back. He went back to the room and the window and looked down at the geranium.

The man was sitting over where it should have been. "I ain't seen you pickin' it up," he said.

Old Dudley stared at the man.

"I seen you before," the man said. "I seen you settin' in that old chair every day, starin' out the window, lookin' in my apartment. What I do in my apartment is my business, see? I don't like people looking at what I do."

It was at the bottom of the alley with its roots in the air.

"I only tell people once," the man said and left the window.

## NANCY SIFF:

### Morning Train

Before the day has swung us roughly over  
Loosing our hold upon the candy world,  
The trainyards lengthening into tracks  
Provide postponement for the siren-song of noon.  
Planned shadows and the sunlight strips imbedded  
In slag as sterile as our irony,  
Trace endlessly the miles in criss-cross ties,  
And trace our sadness through the timeless hour.

The city piling at the river's curving back  
Adjusts to tiled mosaic size and we  
Note jagged roof-line with superior poise—  
Not, as in noonday glare, when terror-spun  
We gore our flesh upon the saw-toothed crest  
And shout our accusations uselessly.

Now there is comfort in the neat-hemmed lawns,  
The blackened marsh-grass inaccessible.  
Strung cars, coal-heaped and donkey-docile weave  
In awkward caravans across the light  
And draw not loathing but dispassionate stare.  
Rails ringing shrilly kill the ceaseless hum  
Of wires spun in webs above the track,  
And seven o'clock is midnight or the end  
Of minutes as the towns change names, go nameless by.

O we have need of space, design and time—  
Of straight line parallels in rushing steel . . .  
At seven when we are fierce with sleep  
And could howl apeline . . . shake the wires down—  
And twist the tracks red-hot around a hill . . .  
Except for neat-hemmed lawns and railroad yards and  
shade.

### Ultimate

This is the moment when the voices lean  
Out to each other and the bodies speak  
This when the river builds towards space  
A tower of moonlight and the world  
Flows downward to the sea.  
The hour when all our knowledge is resolved  
In touch and answers spring  
Like Venus from the hollows of our hands.

The sum of wonder is the escaping chain  
That winds the river and the spilling town  
And questions flare along the waterfront  
Ford Spry for Baking and the Jackfrost sign.  
Panic propels the scarlet ferris wheel  
And pity dulls the tinselled palisades  
While sidewalk footsteps sound the human wail  
That speeds along the lonely subway train.

Believe me builds the bridge of twinkling steel  
Accept me pulls the ocean-liner out  
And Love me Love me sews the tattered seam  
That binds the ragged night from star to star.

### Problem in Higher Mathematics

Wild-grass girls blow in the morning wind  
The bell entwinds them in its spinning web  
And broom invades the dust of last night's dream.  
Leaf-paths collect hard bits of shattered talk  
No cry No cry but half between  
Eight-thirty and the noonday meal  
Professor L has felt the sting of day:  
*Could it be something I forgot to say?*  
*Perhaps they know too much or little*  
*That they stare under thin silence listening*  
*To the wild riot of themselves.*  
*God are they stone? Or should I take them*  
*By surprise and ogle them with love?*

Ten years to prove that two and two make four  
A century to show they may be five  
But how to tell oh how to tell  
Their hostile innocence the end:  
That we are liars and our fives may be  
The tragic total of the One the I  
The fatal answer of necessity.

## SARA LAYTON: No Forks in the Road

William J. Partridge pressed the end of the napkin to his lips with the ends of his fingers and hastened to push back the chair and arise from the table to his full five feet five inches of height.

"Want me to bring you anything tonight, Geneva?" he asked his sister who sat at the opposite end of the table. "I'm having lunch uptown."

Geneva, tall, gaunt and red-headed, emitted a slight grunt from her throat which William took to be a negative answer. With quick, jerky movements she was stacking their breakfast dishes.

"I shouldn't have to work late tonight. Ought to be home by six," William continued.

"All right. I'll have supper ready," Geneva said. "I'm teaching one less lesson today. The Cranson child is sick. The way that little vixen bangs away at those keys! God, am I glad she's not my offspring!"

William, ready to open the door, frowned a little at his sister's language. He did wish that she wouldn't use such coarse language. It reminded him of the young, brittle women in the newspaper office with their fuming cigarettes and lacquered hair. He closed the door behind him and hurried down the steps of the apartment house. He was running a little late and would have to hurry to catch the bus. He hoped that the city would soon run a bus line nearer their apartment. Of course there were hardly any people out here in the new suburb yet, but there would soon be more. Already trees were being cut down by the dozens, and skeletons of houses were standing bleakly in the cleared spaces.

William turned off the dirt sidewalk into a large field where he had worn a narrow course. He slowed down a bit. He enjoyed tremendously this part of his walk every morning. As he approached the corner of the nearby woods, he walked very leisurely, looking all about him. It was as if he were trying to keep his eyes from ever glancing straight ahead of him, from gazing straight ahead to the woods and the little path that he had found there, the narrow entrance to the seemingly endless woods. The thing had almost taken hold of him.

Four weeks ago when he had first come along this way trying to judge the closest shortcut to the bus stop, he had approached the corner of the wood and had suddenly come upon the foot-path. He had observed it curiously, wondering why, out of this grown-up field which had shown no signs of human penetration, there should lie this cloister-like entrance, beginning at the edge of the wood and stretching as far as his eye could see into greenness and shaded depths. It had not grown over at all but looked as if it were in constant use. The most charming thing about it was the enticing way the trees folded over it as if to shelter. It was a little rounded hole like the entrance to some green bower of wooded fairies. It had immediately brought a host of memories to his mind of the wild, free days spent in the woods when he was a boy. Even the smell had a dark aliveness about it like the smell of deep, virgin forests.

William had pondered over the question of who used the path, who had started it. Surely none of the people in his apartment house. They all had cars. So did all the others in the suburb. Some boy perhaps or one of the people from the farms which were scattered around several miles away. But why did it end abruptly at the field? It was as if it had huddled up into a little green ball and stood peering out upon the open field and the newly-erected houses in the distance. And why did he feel that it was not the end of a path but the beginning, an entrance into the woods. He remembered the times in his boyhood when he had followed new trails through the forest on his father's farm, ever discovering new adventures.

Overcome by curiosity and stirred by tingling suppression, he had almost made up his mind to enter and pursue it to its end but had suddenly remembered that it was late, and he had

to run to catch the bus for the office. Once he had been seven-teen minutes late.

"Can't have this, you know, Partridge." The editor was a big, brash man.

And William had felt that he could have slipped out through the keyhole. Since that time, three years ago, he had never been a minute late.

Every morning since that initial experience when he had discovered the path, he had walked along this way, approaching the little path slowly, almost stealthily, enjoying the little bubbles of excitement welling up within him. He wanted to prolong this feeling, and as he came nearer he walked even slower, pretending to be occupied with other thoughts and pretending to be intently regarding the scenes about him, as if he were being watched by some unknown stranger whose loud, ridiculing laughter would ring out at the sight of a man hurrying along through a field to stand finally beside an open space between two trees, panting and straining his eyes to see within the depths.

So it was this morning that as he drew nearer the passage, he mimed his steps as much as he dared, letting the seconds falter through his fingers as sand trickles through the tight fist of a small boy. Half-forgotten thoughts crept out from hidden places in his mind, dark places where they had been wrapped in torn tissue paper and tied with faded ribbons. Romps through the woods on cold, misty mornings when the very ground seemed to discharge cold vapors. Dark gulfs of wild smells, the pulsing aliveness of growing things. Tear-stung eyes and numb fingers. Warm spring afternoons when he had lain flat upon the ground watching with little-boy fascination the human-like actions of a colony of ants. The pungent smell of the damp earth, decaying leaves and hardened sap. Flickering days and carefree and he had been happy.

Coming to stand in front of the Little Path, William strained his eyes again trying to see a little farther, but all was soft greenness. He always expected to meet someone, the someone who had worn the path. When this happened, William knew that he would be an outsider. But no one came this morning, and William began to feel for the first time the doubt that anyone ever would. The way seemed so detached from human existence.

The desire swept strongly over him again, as it had done every morning, to walk in and explore. But he turned with a slight intake of breath and continued his way. When he reached the bus stop he noticed that he still had a few minutes to spare. The blue bus marker had been twisted, evidently by some boys. William noted with amusement that the *B of Bus* had been scraped off so that the sign read "us Stops Here."

That day at the office was like all the others. Adjusting a green shade over his eyes he began work setting the type. The light, filtering through the shade threw green glints upon the white paper. His thoughts wandered back momentarily to the Path. Suddenly he tipped a bottle of ink and it trickled down his hand. He jerked his head back with a grunt. He would have to stop this day-dreaming. To think that a little path through a suburban wood could so distract him. A path in a wood! How had he let himself fall into such imaginings? He, a grown man, trying to prod himself into some excitement, into some vain adventurous boy-musings over an ordinary occurrence. Yet, if only he knew where it led. His thoughts wandered again. Did it curve by a farm? Was there a stream nearby it? Did many people use it? Where were they going?

The morning passed quickly. Mulling around in the drug store after lunch, he heard the men planning a hunting trip. He wondered if there were any birds along his Path, any squirrels whisking up trees looking as if they had electric currents in their bushy tails, any prickly patches of berries.

He caught a ride home in the evening. After supper, Geneva played for him on the piano. This was his favorite time. He loved to sit in the darkening room and feel the soft waves of music. She played well. The chords filled the room. William relaxed in his chair and closed his eyes. Shimmering tempos and

pastel images billowed across his mind. He was a boy again, entering a lush green glade. A silver stream pulsed through deep red banks. Gray squirrels and the song of birds.

The music over, William reluctantly said good night to his sister. He had remembered that tomorrow was Sunday and he had made up his mind—he was going to look around in the woods.

He was awakened by vivid dreams all during the night. Dreams of himself in verdant bowers, dreams of a beautiful creature of the woods. Streams, dreams, shaded in green.

He was up early. At he ate breakfast, he noted the way the sugar looked sprinkled over the cereal flakes. Like snow on brown leaves. The leaves were beginning to fall already.

Soon he was out of the house and heading across the field. Briars clutched at him and weeds pushed at his legs as he hurried along.

Then he was there at the entrance. Almost with a plunge he took the first few steps inside. It really was beautiful. He quickened his pace. He felt that there must be something to see, to discover. A squirrel scuttled across the path in front of him. There were no birds, though. Slackening his speed a little he looked around him. The underbrush was a little thinner-looking

than he had expected. As he peered down the way every morning, the greenness had been soft and massed; now as he looked to his side the trees were like far-spaced sticks. But he felt isolated, and the feeling pleased him. A little farther he came upon a pile of rusty tin cans. A gnawing of something indefinable pricked at his spirit. Glancing ahead of him he saw with surprise that he was reaching the end of the Little Path. It had seemed so short. It wasn't far now to the verge of the wood. He sprinted forward. Only about thirty more yards. The sun ahead seemed much brighter after the shaded light of the wood. Perhaps he would meet someone there, someone he had been searching for. Or a house. Or at least a cleared space. Probably there was a bank that he would have to clamber down. He hadn't thought that he would reach the end so soon. The wood had seemed a large one. Perhaps he hadn't noticed that the path had curved to bring him to the edge of another field. Only a few more steps and he would know. Surely there would have to be something there.

William Partridge reached the end and stood upon a bank, a bank of red clay stretching into a short space of field. Then he saw the sign—the marker which he had seen every morning, the one with the obliterated B.

## JAMES McNALLY:

### Mountain Road

I came to Colorado, for love had gone.  
Names were lost. I was seeking new beauty  
In names that could not be human yet,  
Since the heart's loss had come  
While faithful distance focused hope.  
I remembered Colorado as a name of mountains  
Seen from a passing train  
Heart-rolled to a home no longer there.  
The four round syllables  
Gave beauty and sweep and promise  
To a shattered retrospect.  
Sunday in the mountains clasping Denver  
Rain came by a rock-guarded stream,  
Leaving the air clear afterward.  
Diaphanous clouds disembraced the mountains.  
Thin and drowsy at this height  
The air was richer than I had suspected:  
Clouds passed, the mountains clear,  
A rainbow, a puma and a deer;  
The sheets less empty than before,  
Though denied love's fluid soaring.

The car was parked on the mountain road,  
Waiting for the rain to stop.  
Furtive drops replaced the falling spears.  
A rainbow arched out of a col,  
Bright bands of the spectrum  
Shimmered under the cloud-punctuating sun.  
The fabulous end of the rainbow  
Dipped into the rain-coffed stream  
Before a turn in the road.  
Touch seemed within a hundred strides.  
Memories of childhood  
Commented on the pot of gold.

Slinking in the twilight above our fire,  
Easy cat spring in hind legs,  
A puma carried warm fur in his mouth,  
Slanting through stubbled brush  
To higher ground of trees and den.

He stopped once to glare at the fire,  
Snarling suspicion out of agate eyes,  
Before night absorbed  
The tawny tail more rigidly graphed  
Than the flexed body.

Night and the car returns  
With yellow goggles on the fenders,  
The driver guiding slowly,  
Hoping for a glimpse of game  
In the tree, stone and sloped darkness  
Light-ribboned by the road.  
To one who has been long in city pent  
Seeing something wild brings much content.  
An excited breathing, a releasing of gas,  
Transfixed in the headlights a deer by the road.  
A keen moment while deliberation  
Probed the shining fascination,  
A turn of the proud neck  
With the widely-aware eyes,  
Quick splashes in the shallow stream,  
Swift hindquarters up a shaggy slope  
Soon mingled in the night.  
That was the way my love had gone,  
Stiff-limbed to another shore,  
Beautiful and graceful and tense,  
Fleeing up a frightened slope.  
My hopes went with her,  
My heart splashed in that stream;  
She did not want me to follow.  
That was my road,  
Watched beauty flee;  
The night was dark.  
This is the dust of my road.

What does time carry away from us?  
Remembered beauty by an unexpected road.

## ROSAMOND PUTZEL:

### Quarter Past Four

Mrs. Peverell sat in the stiff wooden rocker and knitted. She expected to have to wait some time for her granddaughter; try as she might, she had never been able to teach Ruth the value of promptness. She compressed her thin lips and set her chin still more firmly as she thought of Ruth's deficiencies, and the needles clicked rapidly as if to emphasize her thoughts. She liked to knit; it kept her hands busy. The devil made work for idle hands to do, and it was quite obvious that Mrs. Peverell would have no dealings with the devil.

Oddly enough, the room looked like Mrs. Peverell. There might be curves in it somewhere, but they all seemed to be angles; it was a staid, Victorian, uncompromising room. The green plush carpet lay sedately on the floor, with never a wrinkle to disturb the even tenor of its ways. The heavy damask drapes hung stolidly at the windows, falling in folds so carefully patterned as to appear plectated. In one corner was a white marble fireplace, which remained eternally white because it remained eternally a stranger to fire; light and warmth would have seemed out of place there. In the center of the mantel was an old French clock, its hands never moving from quarter past four. Flanking the fireplace were massive white sliding doors, always tightly closed to deny entrance to fresh air and strangers.

Mrs. Peverell, too, was staid and Victorian and uncompromising. She always wore somber colors in memory of her husband who had died twenty years before. Today she had on a black dress with a neat white collar—a dress just long enough to indicate her disapproval of skimpy modern skirts. Her hair was pulled severely back and pinned firmly into a bun on her neck, and she wore no make-up; she considered cosmetics and permanent waves slightly immoral. Mrs. Peverell prided herself on disapproving of things.

The steady clicking rhythm of the needles missed a beat; the old lady raised her head as she heard the sound of a familiar step on the porch. A voice called:

"Grandmother?" It was a young voice, a happy voice, the liveliest sound heard in the old house for many years.

"In the parlor, Ruth." Mrs. Peverell spoke in an even, conversational tone; she did not consider it genteel to raise one's voice. The tapping of Ruth's heels was heard in the hall; ridiculous shoes, Mrs. Peverell thought—noisy, impractical, expensive shoes. Her own were neat, comfortable black oxfords.

"Grandmother, I hope it's not too late this time!" Ruth bent to kiss the cheek the old lady turned to her. Mrs. Peverell had her clean white handkerchief ready; she removed the lipstick smeared on her face and glanced at Ruth indignantly. The girl tossed her fur coat over the back of the carved mahogany sofa, which squeaked complainingly under the unaccustomed weight. "I've been in a dreadful rush all day, getting my things packed, and I've only a minute to stay."

"You never have more than a minute to stay," said Mrs. Peverell coldly. Mrs. Peverell did have feelings, and it hurt them to know that Ruth didn't want to come home; sometimes she was very lonely for Ruth.

"I know, grandmother, but I can't leave the office until five, and I have my cooking and sewing and work around the apartment to do at night. And it is so far out here from uptown." Ruth sat down on a stiff little chair, purposely avoiding the sticky horsehair sofa, which she regarded as an old-fashioned booby trap. Her narrow blue skirt barely reached her knees, and the old lady ignored that fact pointedly. Ruth pulled the skirt down a fraction of an inch, which was as far as it would go. She was slightly embarrassed and angry with herself for being so; somehow her grandmother made her feel that legs were an unnecessary affliction.

"What have you been packing for?" asked Mrs. Peverell in a polite effort to relieve the tension. "Are you taking a trip?"

"Yes. To Florida. A manufacturers' convention of some sort, and Mr. Palmer thought he'd need a stenographer. It came up quite suddenly; he just told me yesterday."

There was a brief, ominous silence.

"Do you think that's advisable, Ruth? Going to Florida with that man? I mean, for the appearance of the thing; you must be careful of appearances."

"I think it will probably be all right with the Watch and Ward Society, grandmother," Ruth explained gently and a little acidly. "Mrs. Palmer is going, too."

"Oh." For a moment the conversation was out of Mrs. Peverell's control—but only for a moment. "I should have known you would consider the situation wisely. 'Bring up a child in the way that he should go'—and I did try to do that for you." Her self-satisfied tone implied that she had certainly succeeded.

"You did very well by me, grandmother," Ruth answered gently, with a touch of pity. And she added to herself, "I only thank God I got out of here when I did. I might have been shut up in this nun's cell, sitting on that damned horsehair sofa, with nothing but my knitting to keep my soul alive!"

Mrs. Peverell glanced up quickly, then picked up her needles and began to work again. She wasn't sure just how she should talk to her granddaughter now; the girl didn't seem to belong here any more. When she was a child, Ruth had had to fit herself into the old lady's pattern for living, but now she belonged with another kind of people—the kind Mrs. Peverell would have disliked thoroughly, if her grandchild hadn't been one of them.

Ruth, too, was thinking how awkward it was not to be able to chat easily with her only relative. She sat with her eyes fixed on the marble-topped table standing against the dark panels of the far wall. It amazed her that anyone could clutter up one table with such an odd assortment: a black lamp bordered with amber droplets, two tinted daguerreotypes, two brass colonial ladies serving as bookends for the old Bible, a china shepherdess, a tiny gold lustre pitcher, and a friendship book left over from someone's school days. Ruth's own small apartment was decorated in a severe modern style, with comfortable chairs and a minimum of ornaments.

She roused herself and made another effort at conversation.

"What are you knitting, grandmother?"

"The afghan I promised you," answered Mrs. Peverell. "I think I'll have it finished before your birthday." She slipped a small wool square off the needles. "When are you leaving for the trip?"

"This afternoon, at five." Ruth rose and reached for her coat. "I guess I'd better go on now; it'll take some time to get to the airport, and I can't miss the plane."

"I'm glad you stopped by, Ruth." Mrs. Peverell put her knitting aside and stood up. "Come back soon." There was more urgency in those words than a polite invitation required.

"Good-bye, grandmother." Ruth already began to feel relieved. The heavy atmosphere of that room hung like a pall over her spirit; she could breathe more freely outside.

Mrs. Peverell heard the front door close. She stood staring at the portrait of her husband over the mantel. The old gentleman was posed behind a desk, wearing his black frock coat, a black four-in-hand, and a black goatee; he looked over the room as if he were guarding it, as if there should be a brass plate on the door, reading "Sacred to the memory of Thomas Allen Peverell."

The clock beneath the portrait was set at quarter past four. By that clock, thought Mrs. Peverell, it had been quarter past four for some time now.

She sat down in the stiff wooden rocker and picked up her knitting again.

LUCY M. RODGERS:

Rust on the Pump

Tall, slow, lumbering, he eased the screen door open by its spool handle, turned the brown knob, and forced the door open with one heavy hand. The milk sloshed as he set the bucket on the table, its foam spilling over the edge and sliding slowly down the side. He left it there, almost a full pail tonight. He turned, brushing the table leg with one bagged overall knee, and walked with deliberate steps of big shoes past his wife's sagging back, leaving beside the table a piece of caked, red mud. He did not light the lamp, but sat down in a rocker with shoe-scarred rungs and almost broken bottom. Reaching up one hardened hand, he took off the battered felt hat.

The radio was close beside him on the table. With his left hand he turned it on, an awkward motion that twisted the palm upward, stained, lined. The battery set blared forth immediately, crowding the room with twanging hill-billy guitars. He twisted the knob a little . . . "in the outskirts of Berlin, while American forces crossed the Elbe expecting little resistance on their trek to the capital of the Reich . . ." The radio clicked off, and the room was too quiet. Pushing out one leg, he reached in his pocket and brought out a long kitchen match. The sudden glow of the flame as he struck it showed the dirt under his nails and the split nails themselves, and threw a circle of light on the square-jawed face and mouth a little too tightly closed. Stubby blond beard and fixed lines showed as he lit the lamp. Reaching out for the weekly newspaper which was lying on the table, he unfolded it and looked at the front page. Blue eyes, almost watery, wandered over the headlines, paused on a list of war-dead, then over the top of the paper to the top of the piano and stopped for a minute on a wooden thermometer with dust on it. At its base was printed, "Souvenir of Fort Bragg, North Carolina." His eyes returned to the newspaper. He scratched his neck, and beyond the red V where his collar was open, his skin was surprisingly fair.

Putting the newspaper down after a minute, he pulled himself up and started toward the shelf. There was rust in the bottom of the dipper when he picked it up to drink, and there was rust in the bottom of the bucket when he put the dipper back. He noticed that the water was low. Picking up the pail, he pulled the door open and went out. There was a red mud ring on the table where the bucket had been.

The handle of the pump yielded stubbornly to his push. It went down, sliding hard, scraping rust on rust, catching, and up, screeching mechanically until its curved end struck the top of the iron slit into which it fitted, a deadened clank, then down again and up again. The water hesitated. Then suddenly it poured out of the iron mouth, spurted, stopped, poured again. When he had pumped the bucket full, he swung it from the iron hook and walked up the concrete steps into the house. The lamp on the cater-cornered shelf made him look at its brightness, and after he looked away he could see how dark the corner of the room was where his wife was pushing the coffee pot to the back of the wood stove. He stood with the bucket in one hand and the door held open with the other and watched her bend to open the oven door, watched the uneven back of her print dress pull up, watched the dirty pink of the petticoat show, watched the rolled top of the heavy stockings fitting into the mark they had made on the dead white legs, watched the stockings and the roll become a part of the legs, watched her stand up again with the pan of hot, big biscuits in her hand. She looked at his hand resting on the door. He closed it and put the water bucket on the shelf.

There was supper on the table, and he sat down at the place where the coffee was already poured. Clumsily he took heaping tablespoonfuls of the brown beans and the pale green cabbage. He ate slowly with big, open mouthfuls; and when he had finished, he wiped his mouth and bearded chin with the back of his rough hand. The grease shone in a streak at the corner of his

mouth. Pushing back his chair, he looked at his wife chewing, and automatically pulled at a blue-tagged string hanging from his overall pocket. The bag of tobacco was dingy, and the paper that he rolled the cigarette from was creased. As he licked the edge of the paper, his eyes left his wife's mouth and passed over her head, to the wavering flame of the lamp, fell to a shotgun shell and two 22-rifle bullets lying at the base of the lamp, and went back to the flame.

After awhile, he got up and went out the door. Down the concrete steps, worn and stained red by the mud, down the hill, slow, careless, one foot in front of the other, watery-blue eyes restless in the coming twilight. Up the hill again, heavy mule, heavy man. The red mud caked on the mule's shoes and in the hollow under the man's instep.

"C'mon, Tom." Roughly. The mule stuck his nose into the wooden trough. His lips pushed back over cracked teeth, and the water gurgled and slushed down his throat. Down the hill again, man and mule, twilight-deadened steps, into the tomb-like barn.

A moon lighted the barn and the corn-crib beside it hazily as through smoke as he turned to leave. He stopped for a minute in front of the corn-crib and saw that there were no shadows where the logs fitted together carefully. He took a string with keys tied to it from his pocket and unlocked the door methodically. With hunched shoulders and a leg lifted high over the log sill, he went inside and stepped from the path of the weak moonlight to see it shine on the orange-red ears of hard corn and the burlap bags stacked together. He looked away from the corn when a scraping noise stopped. Silence. Then a small tapping, rolling, and silence. Slowly he walked over to the corner where there was no longer any noise. One foot dragged a grain of corn, and the harsh scrape was like dissonance in the quietness. The gleaming, bare tail was too long for a rat, and the rest of the animal's body lay still in the shadow. The light made diffused patterns on his face as it tightened and hardened like frozen mud around the pump. He circled the 'possum step by step with his heavy shoes moving between the ears of corn. One ear he picked up with care and put it down out of the way, and the animal pretended to be dead. He took a stick from the corner and stared at the inert body with frozen blue eyes.

Then, suddenly the moon's pale light changed into a brilliant flood, and the man's mask-face grew alive in its light. He threw the stick down and caught the 'possum at its neck. Holding it in front of him with its head turned toward him, he choked it, choked it until his knuckles were distorted and his eyes were slits. The animal's face bulged, and its breath wheezed out. Its tail was rigid. The man's face was red. His muscles were black and pale in the moon's bright light. He squeezed until his veins stood out. He did not breathe, and his mouth was drawn tight. Blood flowed from the 'possum's nose and open mouth. But the man squeezed still, even when its gleaming tail hung limp, squeezed until there was no more blood in his white hands, only the blood of the animal darkening them. He squeezed and the red in his face grew darker. He squeezed and he did not breathe.

As suddenly as the moon had come out, it went under, and the man released his grip. The animal fell to the floor, and the distorted knuckles relaxed from their aching, cramped position. His breath came in short, panting gasps, and the muscles in his face moved. His arms lost their angular shadows and hung by his sides. He stood slightly bent over with his eyes on the animal, stunned, looking at the bulging eyes, examining the distended neck, and his breath slowly came back. He leaned over, picked up the 'possum's dead body by its long tail, went out of the corn-crib, and laid it down carefully, nose first, on the hard-packed red mud. He looked at the blood on the hand that had dropped the tail, and the blood on the ground beside the pointed nose. As he rubbed it into the red earth with the sole of his shoe, a sort of calmness came over him, and the muscles in his face left it smooth. Darkness, restfulness, forgetfulness. With the side of his foot he drew a line like a plowed furrow where the blood had been.

## JOHN ORR:

## The Playhouse

"Always come to the back door," Mrs. Griffin had said. "It's best that you always come to the back door."

Remembering this, Jamie walked back across the smooth green lawn, past the big white house, feeling the clipped wet grass blades under his bare feet, breathing the clean sweet pine smell in the air. Mrs. Griffin would ask him what month of the year it was, and he would tell her it was June, because that was one of the things he remembered from yesterday's lesson. She would also give him a pocket watch and ask him what time of the day it was, as she always did, and he would be unable to tell her, though he would try very hard. He knew he would only shake his head, and she would frown for a moment and tell him he wasn't trying. But he would soon smile her into good humor again, and they would go on to other things.

He stopped by the lily pool under the tupelo tree and watched the goldfish dart in and out among the blurred stems and leaves in the shallow blue-gray water. Mrs. Griffin had told him once that fish breathed water just as the rest of us breathe air, and he had wondered how it would feel to draw water up through his nose and into his lungs. He had tried it yesterday afternoon while swimming alone in the creek. But breathing water only made his nose and throat tighten up, and he had had to get out and lie down on his stomach and choke up all the water.

"Hello."

It was a voice he recognized, but, turning, he could see no one near. "Hello, there," the voice came again, and he saw Marcella standing over beside her little blue playhouse, her long yellow curls sending tiny glints of light out into the sunshine.

Marcella was Mrs. Griffin's granddaughter. Jamie liked her: she was clean and fresh and little, and he liked the smoothness of her pale even skin. He liked Mrs. Griffin too, but the younger woman—Marcella's mother—had ugly gray eyes and an angry-looking furrow between her eyebrows, and something seemed always to be hurting her inside. She had once told Jamie to keep away from Marcella, to never, never even touch her. Jamie hadn't understood why until Mrs. Griffin had said to him: "You are sixteen years old, Jamie, and Marcella is only nine. It is best that you find someone nearer your own age to play with." But Marcella seemed to like him, and she never made fun of him the way boys and girls his own age did.

"Come over here," Marcella said.

"Uh uh," Jamie said.

"I want you to play house."

"Can't," Jamie said, remembering the deep furrow between her mother's eyebrows.

Marcella shrugged, opened the door to her playhouse and walked in. Jamie stood by the lily pool and watched the door close behind her and he wished more than ever that he could enter the little blue house and see what was inside. It is a much nicer house, he thought, than the one I live in all the time.

He turned and walked over to the back terrace of Mrs. Griffin's house and trudged up the three steps to the concrete floor. Marcella's mother was lying in a swing, reading a magazine and smoking a cigarette. Her dull brown hair was curled around paper rollers and lay in flat little circles all over her head. Jamie said, "Hello," but Marcella's mother continued reading without looking up.

Jamie knocked on the back door and waited. After a moment, a window above him opened and Mrs. Griffin smiled down at him from her pink and wrinkled face.

"Oh, it's you, Jamie," she called.

"Yes'm."

"I didn't expect you so early," Mrs. Griffin said. "I'll be down after a while. You go play out in the yard till I'm ready."

Jamie sat down on the concrete floor of the terrace and looked up at Marcella's mother lying in the swing. "Pop came home drunk again last night," he said. "Had to put him to bed."

"Hmm," Marcella's mother said.

"Pop comes home nearly every night drunk."

Marcella's mother turned her head from the magazine and frowned down at him. "I'm reading, Jamie," she said. "You're disturbing me."

Jamie got to his feet and walked down the three steps off the terrace, letting his fingernails click against the iron rods of the railing. He hopped on one foot over to the lily pool where he leaned over and held his face close to the surface of the water, balancing his knees on the concrete ledge. The goldfish darted away into the leaves and stems. Jamie wondered if the hazy blue-gray blur before his face was the only thing in the world that fish were ever able to see.

"What you doing?"

Jamie looked up and saw Marcella sitting on the limb of the tupelo tree. She was swinging her legs back and forth at him. Jamie could think of nothing to say to her, so he looked back into the water and stirred up little waves with his fingers. Marcella let herself slip from the tree limb and landed with a thump on the ground.

"Let's play house," she said.

"Can't," he said.

"You're silly. Of course you can. I heard Grandmama say your lesson wouldn't start till after a while."

Jamie wished Marcella would go away. He wanted to play with her, but he was afraid he'd get into trouble again, and Mrs. Griffin would quit giving him these lessons. Then he'd have to go back to school, where he'd sit all day in a classroom with a lot of boys and girls who barely came up to his waist and who shot water pistols at him. It was so much nicer to come up to Mrs. Griffin's big white house every day and listen to her sweet sing-song voice as she talked to him on the bench under the tupelo tree.

Now, he felt, rather than saw, Marcella standing next to him, staring down at him with her wide friendly eyes. "You've never even seen inside my playhouse," she said. "Come on over and see the inside of my playhouse."

Jamie stood up and said, "Don't want to."

"It's got a real fireplace, and a real table and chairs, and a real bed. And a radio, only that's not real."

"Don't want to."

"There's a rug on the floor and candlesticks on the mantel."

Jamie picked up a rock and threw it over into the vacant lot next door. "Why ain't the radio real?"

"I don't know," Marcella said. "But it *looks* real. I bet you couldn't tell it from a real one."

Jamie looked up on the terrace. Marcella's mother was no longer there.

"All right," he said. "I'll look at it, I guess."

He followed Marcella over to the little blue house. He couldn't think of any reason for not going inside; he'd be careful not to break anything or to get mud on the floor or to make too much noise.

Marcella stood in the door and looked at him. "Well, come on," she said. "Come on in."

He had to stoop down to get through the door. It was dim inside, for the two windows were small. A single shaft of light from one of them made a neat little square on the pillow of a bed. In the dim light, he could barely make out the half-sized furniture, the tiny fireplace, the pasteboard radio. Seated in one chair was a big doll he had seen in Marcella's arms many times. Everything was clean and tidy and in place. He hoped he wasn't getting mud on the floor.

"Sit down, please," Marcella said. "It's time for supper."

So it was a game. So Marcella wanted to play a game.

He seated himself in one of the tiny chairs and Marcella giggled when she saw how his knees nearly reached to his chin. She moved the doll out of the other chair and sat across the table from him.

"We're very poor," she said solemnly. "We have nothing but coffee for supper tonight." She picked up a white pitcher and poured water into two tiny teacups.

"It's snowing outside," she continued, "and we don't even have enough money to buy wood for the fire."

Jamie accepted the teacup she offered him and put it to his lips, thinking, "This is my own home, and this is my wife, and we have nothing but coffee for supper tonight."

They sipped from the teacups in silence, watching each other carefully over the rims, eager that neither would break the spell, that neither would utter a word contrary to this strange and wonderful mood. Jamie tried not to hear the bluebirds singing in the tupelo tree, the distant purr of an automobile, the intermittent buzz of a lawnmower.

"The north wind is blowing," Marcella was saying, "and we are very very cold and there is no wood for the fire in the fireplace."

When they had emptied the teacups, Marcella stood up and turned the little knob on the pasteboard radio. "Would you care to hear some music?"

"Yes," he said, watching her sit on the bed and fold her hands across her knees. Marcella began to hum softly under her breath, an odd tuneless air. Jamie sat in the tiny chair, resting his chin on his knees and watching her.

After a while, she stopped humming and lay back across the bed. The single shaft of light from the window caught in her hair and Jamie was reminded of a mirror flashed against the sun.

"It's time for bed," she said. "It's time we were asleep."

As Jamie sat on the bed beside her, he thought how nice it would be to touch the sparkle in her hair. "Lie down," she said, "it's past your bedtime."

He lay beside her and stretched his feet down beyond the end of the bed. Marcella closed her eyes tightly, too tightly, for there were tiny wrinkles around the edge of them. Jamie watched her and was glad to be so close to the sparkle of her hair. For a moment there was no sound in all the world; for a moment there was no seeing, only the tiny glints of sunlight in Marcella's golden hair.

*It is very cold outside. The north wind is very cold.*

Neither of them heard the door open. Neither of them saw the drawn harsh face peering through the dimness of the room. It was only the gasp they heard, the hollow rasp of indrawn air across the dry throat.

"What are you doing?" they heard. "Oh God in heaven, what are you doing?"

Jamie felt the fingernails bite into his shoulder, felt his head bump against the ceiling, felt the stinging slap across his face, saw Marcella's mother staring, in odd horror, at him. The furrow between her eyebrows was deeper than he ever imagined it could be, and there was fury in her eyes. She was screaming at him, but the only words he could hear were "... never come back, never come back."

Jamie ran blindly out of the little blue house, out into the bright sunlight, barely seeing Mrs. Griffin standing on the back terrace, both hands across her lips, staring at him in frozen surprise.

He ran past the tupelo tree, past the lily pool, down across the long expanse of neatly-clipped lawn. Once he thought he heard Mrs. Griffin calling to him, but he didn't look back, for the tears in his eyes turned all the world into a blue-gray blur.

## MELICENT HUNEYCUTT:

### Mary Ponders

When Your baby skirl  
wakes the night,  
do jasper walls, and gates of pearl,  
and streets of light,  
wings that rustle and that swirl  
dazzling bright,  
come in dreams to memory's sight?

When You watch Your star  
with wide eyes,  
would You break the onyx bar  
of night-time skies,  
entering that palace far  
where, God-wise,  
Your Father suffers with Your cries?

## MARY BETH LITTLE:

### Red Fox

Autumn like a swift and flaming fox  
Ran through the ringing trees.  
His way was betrayed by shrill color  
And a maze of footprint-leaves.

My time-and-wall-leashed senses, like hounds  
Desirous of the chase,  
Bayed plaintively and strained against  
Their cruel and chafing trace.

Now the hounds of my soul range free  
Down the path that autumn sped—  
But the leaf tracks are rain-blurred; the trail is cold.  
The red red fox has fled.

## WARREN MILLER:

## Brüder und Schwester

The voices all are silent, the last chair scrapes, footsteps, the door. The door is softly shut. The house is empty now but for the two of them, brother and sister. She lies in her small bed, a soft rag doll in her arms, vaguely aware that something has happened. She is five; her face is small and pale, her small hands perfect on the blue blanket. He sits by the bed, moving it a little, trying to give it a rocking motion. He is eleven; his hair is black and close to the scalp, revealing all the fine contours of his head.

"Go to sleep now," he says.

"Where is mother?"

He hears the silence creeping up the stairs.

"She'll be back soon."

Voices from the street. Sky turning to grey. Evening, and the window darkens.

"Go to sleep." He rocks the bed.

"Tell me a story first."

"I don't know any stories, Esther." And he stares across her bed and out of the window at the sparrows wheeling like wind-swept leaves across the grey sky, the bare branches of a black tree, the house across the street. November there.

She begins to cry. Not knowing why she cries. He touches her hand. "Ah Esther, please don't cry." For if she cries he must cry also. She pretends that she cries because he will not tell a story. "Then tell me a story," she says. And he tells her about a little girl named Esther who had a brother named Johnathan and they lived in a little house in the woods and the birds flew there tweet tweet and they had a cat meow and one day . . .

She is asleep. He moves silently to the door, turns and looks at Esther. He walks down the stairs, noiselessly. He does not know whether his silence is for Esther or whether it is for the empty rooms below. In all the house now there is no sound. At the bend of the stairs he sees the big room below. The chairs that had been set in neat straight rows now belly and twist. He walks down slowly; it is as if he has never done it before, has never seen these rooms before.

He reads the undertaker's name on the backs of the chairs. They frighten him. They are associated with the heavy dark coffin that was in the center of the room and the pale men in black clothes. There are no rugs on the floor. He crawls under the piano that was to him, in games, ship and store and fortress.

My father is dead, he tells himself. Remembering his quiet presence in the house, his candy kindnesses.

My father has died. Remembering the calm hardness of his face, the golden wafer of his watch.

They are burying him in the ground. Then quickly, to escape that thought, he tells himself: My name is Johnathan. And to assure himself he says it aloud; "Johnathan." The sound of it in all that stillness frightens him. For what if someone should answer? Never was memory of that day more vivid than when he returned, seven years later, from his second year away at school. On that bright, fine June morning the sound and texture of the funeral day returned to him. But it was no longer frightening. He was a spectator now, not a participant. He had changed roles, or, rather, he had stepped out of the small boy and regarded him now from a distance, watched him crouched, frightened and trembling, under the piano. The same thing had happened in his memory of the day his sister was born.

He was standing at the head of the stairs in his pajamas. It was morning. His aunt shouted up the stairs: "Guess what? You have a sister. She was born early this morning. You have a brand new sister." And he laughed, not believing, and using that day's popular expression said: "That'll be the day." But when he thought of it, when he told it to his sister, he was always at the foot of the stairs, looking up. He could never get up with the small boy saying, "That'll be the day."

After his father died two changes took place in the household: his mother went to work and his grandmother came to live with them. Esther became his charge. In the mornings, before leaving for school, he would wake her and help her dress. She liked him to carry her on his back down stairs and into the breakfast-room. Their grandmother, who was Austrian-born, on seeing them, would cry, "Brüder und schwester, brüder und schwester." The first day he carried her his mother was still home and she told him not to do that again, that he would drop her.

"Drop her!" Johnathan said. "Drop her!" He was angry as a person is angry who is charged with stealing a thing that is already his. But he continued carrying her.

In the afternoons, returning from school, he would find Esther waiting for him. She wanted him to read to her or play some game with her. There were no children in the neighborhood her age, and all day she waited only for his return. Some days he did not want to stay in with her, but wanted to go out with his friends; and then she would cry and he would stay. Some days he left her crying but, returning, seeing her loneliness he felt ashamed and would try to make up for it by doing all the things she asked. But there was nothing one-sided about it; he felt a need for her. Even then she was his confidante: he told her what he did and what he wanted to do, and she listened, sometimes not understanding fully. But she never betrayed any of his secrets.

Because he was older than she and treated her as an equal, she grew quickly beyond her years. Before she entered school he had taught her to read and write. When she was ten she read the books that he, at sixteen, was reading. As they grew older the difference between their ages became smaller and smaller. Even physically she was more mature than other girls her age. When they walked down the street people took him to be perhaps two years older. She no longer allowed him in her room when she dressed.

They shared everything they had and did and kept no secrets from each other. They laughed at and felt pity for the same things; they liked and disliked the same things. But they sometimes quarreled and did not speak to each other for days. Usually it was he who made up with her. He would try to make her laugh or ask her if she would like to go to the movies. And if all else failed he would finally buy her something that she wanted. Then they would be like lovers again and talk, dispassionately, about the quarrel and who was right and who was wrong.

Warm summer nights when sleeping was difficult they took walks together late at night. They walked down to the river and sat on the grassy banks, watching the moon on the water, listening to the soft sound of it laving the shore.

"What was Dad like, Johnny? I don't remember him; I can't even remember what he looked like."

"He was quiet," Johnathan said. And then he realized there was nothing more to say about him. "He was a quiet man," he said.

"Not like us," Esther said.

"No," he said simply, implying that he knew no answer was needed.

~

In restaurants and buses and public places they did crazy things and pretended indifference to everyone about them. If they felt that someone sitting near by was listening to their conversation, they would, without change of tone or expression, carry on a crazy dialogue. One of them would begin:

"I think it was rather rude of you to throw that dish at grandmother. After all, she was telling you for your own good."

And the other, pretending anger, would cry: "You have no night to speak. What about the night you tied her to the chair when she wouldn't give you five dollars?"

They seemed to be perfectly oblivious of everyone about them. It was a fine act and they enjoyed it. When one of them tired of talking about his beaten grandmother, he would change the

conversation abruptly and the other would follow. There was no need for signals; they knew each other's mind, when to stop and when to start again.

Or, walking down the street, he would place his hand under her elbow, holding her arm at an awkward angle, and she let her hand droop as if it were paralyzed. Like a crazy bridal pair they walked down the street, demanding that people look at them.

Walking back from the river, late at night and the streets empty, they felt completely free and uninhibited. She snatched off his cap and, throwing it in the air, would run from him. He chased her, shouting and laughing.

As they neared home, she took his elbow as he did hers, and he let his hand droop lifelessly and held his arm at a crazy angle; and she led him down the dark street, chanting, "The bridegroom cometh. The bridegroom cometh." Not to disturb their mother, who was asleep, they entered the house stealthily as thieves.

He walked with eager steps that early morning street. The stores were not yet open; the sun was straight ahead of him and he walked toward it. Home again, he cried, home again. And the suitcase in his hand was a lightness and his heels rang gaily on the pavement.

He knocked at the door; and there was Esther.

"Johnny," she said. His mother with tremulous joy kissed his cheek; how tall he had grown, how sure, how new and strange.

He smiled at them. "I'm hungry," he said. "Would you find it in your hearts to feed a starving man who has walked this day many a lonely mile in his search for the lost and loved?"

His mother stood by the stove watching him eat. Esther sat across the table, watching him, staring at him, thinking, Who is this wonderful stranger in my house and where, where, has he come from? Where will he go and what is he to me?

"Do you want more, Johnathan?" his mother asked. "More of anything?" But thinking only: how big he is, how tall, how changed. Is that my son, that stranger at my table? "Anything else, John? Anything at all?"

And Esther, not wishing to betray her thoughts, but feeling the need for speech, finding nothing else to say, said, "I have an evening gown. My first; it's lovely; I'll show it to you. Will you take me dancing?"

"But that's why I came home," he said, and they laughed together and the mother felt a little hurt but was not certain why.

"I could fry some eggs, Johnny," she said.

"No, mother, thanks. I've had enough," he said.



He had sent his trunk a few days before he left and now it was in his bedroom. He and Esther were unpacking it; they had had to wait for him to come home, they did not have the key. The mother had left for work and they were alone in the house. And because they had been parted for months there was a strangeness between them and they spoke of little things while they worked, attempted to become intimate again. He took his clothing from the trunk and gave them to Esther; she put them in the closet.

"I'm sorry I wasn't here when Gramma died," he said.

"She was very old," Esther said. "She died very quickly."

He dropped a pair of shoes on the floor and knelt again before the open trunk.

"I had always thought of death," Esther said, "as a slow process. You know, hospitals and anaesthetics. Oxygen tents. I never imagined it's coming to you while you're sitting in a rockingchair with your afternoon cup of tea."

She moved noiselessly to the closet. A tall girl, slim, white-faced and always cool. Her hands, putting coats on hangers, made intricate designs in the air.

"You're thirteen now?" he asked.

"Almost fourteen," she said and laughed. "Why can't you ever remember?"

The bottom of the trunk was lined with books, school texts, novels and poetry. She knelt down beside him. "More," she said. "Where are we going to put these?" She read the titles. "Which shall I read first?" And suddenly she remembered he was tired . . . the long train ride, and the last nights at school, little sleep. "I'm going to sleep now, Esther. Don't wake me for anything."

"All right, but give me a book to read first."

He had forgotten how soft his own bed was and for a moment it frightened him when he felt himself sinking down and down. Soon he was asleep. The warmth of sleep brought color to his face, he curled in on himself, a lock of hair cast a shadow on his forehead; he looked young and frighteningly vulnerable.

Esther, with the book under her arm, walked down the stairs. She sat in a big soft chair and settled herself for comfortable readings, a bowl of small green grapes on the table by the chair. It was a strange book, she thought, and quite unlike any she had ever read before. From most books she extracted bright colors, but in this they were all half-tones: the two young men in the tower by the sea, there was all a grayness there. She put a green grape in her mouth. And the sea . . . "the snot-green sea." The green grape. She threw down the book and went into the kitchen and spit the grape into the sink. She felt a little ill.

The doorbell rang, shrilly, cursed through the afternoon silence of the house, and Esther ran quickly to the door. It was the paperboy, collecting fifteen cents for the week's news. Just a minute, she told him and, leaving the door open, looked for her purse. She had only a dollar bill.

She asked the boy if he had change for a dollar.

He had not.

"Wait a minute, then. I'll see if my brother has it . . . he just got home," she said.

Esther shook him gently. "Jonathan . . . Johnny. Do you have any money? The paperboy is here and I haven't any change. Johnny."

He opened his eyes, but he was not awake: sleep was too strong. "I don't have any more," he said. "They've taken it away."

Esther laughed, amused and exasperated. "Johnny, wake up, please. I need money for the paper boy."

"They've taken it away from me," he said, out of dreams. "All gone," he said, smiling sadly. He rolled over and closed his eyes. Esther looked through his trousers pockets but there was no change there either.

"Look," she said to the boy, "come back later and have some change, will you?"

And before the boy answered . . . or did he answer and the other voice drown him? . . . Beatrice shouted, "Hello . . . has your mother left yet?"

Esther moaned to herself. Oh God, now *she* has to come. "Yes, Bea, she's left." But Beatrice kept on down the walk and the paperboy stepped onto the grass to let her pass.

Beatrice came into the house with her and sat down in Esther's chair . . . at home, the mother's friend. The only thing, Esther often thought, that they really have in common is that they are both widows.

But Beatrice was younger than her mother. She had a fine full figure and black hair; there were a few strands of gray. Esther and Johnathan argued about that. Esther said she had gray in her hair; Johnathan said no, she hadn't. But it was her voice that Esther hated more than anything else. Her voice was breathless and vibrant and she made you feel that she had just come from a place that was gay and exciting, and in a moment, when she left you, she would be going to another place that was even more exciting and gay, and would you come too?

"Is Johnathan home yet?" Bea asked.

"He came this morning, Bea. He's sleeping now." *Is that why you came here?* "I was just going to make a cool drink; Johnathan will want one when he wakes up."

"Of course, dear, go right ahead. I'll wait here."

Esther went into the kitchen and prepared the drink. Working, she was annoyed because she could not remember what the paperboy had said. Or had he said anything at all? Goddam Beatrice anyway. But why should she think the paperboy was going to say anything of importance, anything that mattered? That annoyed her too; why should it have been of importance? Gathering together the empty halves of oranges she saw the green grape in the sink and felt ill again.

"This is a strange book," Beatrice said, standing at the kitchen door. And Esther knew then that she would never like that book . . . not if Beatrice thought the same of it as she.

Johnathan awoke and heard his voice saying, "What What?" It was late afternoon and evening was already sifting into the room like a fine gray mist, giving depth to all things. He felt refreshed and strangely strong and walked about the room in his bare feet, picking up objects, testing his strength. And the heavy things were light and the light ones were heavy but he could lift them anyway. He heard Beatrice's voice and he turned on the light and combed his hair, put on a robe and went downstairs.

But he looked so won-der-ful, Beatrice said, her voice expiring and running with gay shadows. Won-der-ful. Didn't Esther think so too? Oh, and she wagered Mother was happy to have him home. And all the time she could not take her eyes from him, could not get enough of him. While Esther watched and hated her.

Before she left Johnathan had agreed to come to her place that night to hear all the new records she had bought since he was last home. And when finally she left, Esther and he stood at the door and watched her walk down the street.

"Look at that poor old grey-haired lady," Johnathan said, laughing.

And Esther said, "I never said she was grey; I said she has grey *hairs* . . . and she has."

He put his arm around her and pulled her into the house. "Forget it," he said, "I was only joking."

Esther looked up at him and said, her voice whispering, "I think you look just won-der-ful." And they both laughed and all the strangeness between them was gone.

When Esther and the mother were doing the dinner dishes Johnathan thought it was the best time to leave. That way Esther could not say to wait a second, that she would come too. But it would not do, he knew, to leave without saying anything.

"Will you be coming over later?" he asked, either or the two of them.

"Tell Bea to phone me," his mother said. "I don't feel like going out tonight." And Esther said, "I may be over later."

"Well, what time?"

"What's the difference?" Esther said, not looking at him.

Walking to Beatrice's he thought of all the other times he had been there, alone with her. Last summer, home from his

first year at school, he thought he would try it then. He wasn't a baby anymore; he had learned a lot. But he was afraid of her laughter. What if she laughed at him? Would she laugh? Would she tell mother? No, she couldn't very well do that. But tonight he would try; he would, really. If she laughed . . . then that would be that. He would know once for all. But she wouldn't. He could tell . . . the way she looked at him. And Esther must have noticed too; that's why she was so jealous. All right, tonight then. Right away. She won't laugh.

He knocked at the door. And later he wanted to shout his joy because it had been so easy. She did not laugh. She said, "Why did you wait so long?"

There was only one bad moment. Her head was on his chest and he was stroking her hair, gazing at the wall, not seeing anything. Then he looked down at his hand on her head and saw the grey hairs; and there was a knock at the door.

Beatrice raised her head and looked at him. What shall we do? her eyes demanded. He put his lips to her ear, "Don't make any noise," he said. "Let her knock."

"I wonder who it could be?" she whispered.

"It's Esther. Let her knock."

~

Esther was alone in the living room reading when he came in. She would not look at him. He swept the newspapers from a chair and sat down, crossed his legs and lighted a cigarette.

She continued reading the book, as if there were no one else in the room.

"Did you go over to Bea's tonight, Es?"

No answer.

"I left early and went for a walk. Bea had to go out. She had a date and had forgotten about it. I was there for only about half an hour before I left."

"Please," she said, in the tone of one who is doing a big thing and does not want to be disturbed by anything trivial. "Please."

And it angered him, her feigned unconcern infuriated him. She *should* care. He stood and walked across the newspapers and went over to her and took the book from her hands. "All right," he said, "I *was* there. And I *heard* you knocking at the door. And I *knew* it was you."

"Please," she said, "you'll wake mother."

"What in hell do you think I am? I'm just the same . . ."

"Oh let me alone."

" . . . as anyone else. It's rotten, it's . . . that's what it is. You're . . ." He saw her white hand and little lips. Anger and sadness crippled his speech. He no longer knew, or cared, what he said, only that it should be loud and passionate. But neither in his anger nor his sadness could he find words or heart to say how he saw their love: how pure and how rotten, how altogether wrong.

He paused for breath and Esther cried, "Oh let me alone." And the mother in an old nightgown, aroused from sleep, stood at the head of the stairs and, admonishing, said, "Children, children."

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